

EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	Introduction
4	About <i>A Spectrum of Faith</i>
5	Iowa Common Core State Standards
6	🌙 Ezan: Islamic and Educational Center (Islam)
8	🌀 Wat Phothisomphan (Theravada Buddhism)
10	✝️ Greek Orthodox Church of St. George (Orthodox Christianity)
12	ॐ Hindu Cultural and Educational Center (Hinduism)
14	🌟 Tifereth Israel Synagogue (Conservative Judaism)
16	🌀 Tu Viện Hồng Đức (Mahayana Buddhism)
18	🌀 Sikhs of Iowa Khalsa Heritage, Inc. (Sikhism)
20	🌙 Islamic Center of Des Moines (Islam)
22	✝️ Basilica of St. John (Catholic Christianity)
24	🌟 Beth El Jacob (Orthodox Judaism)
26	ॐ Hindu Temple and Cultural Center (Hinduism)
28	🌀 Iowa Sikh Association (Sikhism)
30	🌙 Masjid an-Noor (Islam)
32	🌟 Temple B’nai Jeshurun (Reform Judaism)
34	✝️ Burns United Methodist Church (Protestant Christianity)





INTRODUCTION

Educational Supplement for *A Spectrum of Faith*

You hold in front of you—or maybe are viewing online—an educational supplement for *A Spectrum of Faith: Religions of the World in America's Heartland*. No doubt you are already familiar with *A Spectrum of Faith*; otherwise, why would you be holding or viewing its educational supplement! But just in case you're not: *A Spectrum of Faith* is a Drake University student-written, photo-narrative about fifteen diverse religious communities in greater Des Moines. Not only did Drake students research and write *A Spectrum of Faith*; they also edited, designed, and marketed it.

This two-year process culminated in April 2017 with the publication of *A Spectrum of Faith* by the Drake Community Press (DCP). DCP, the brainchild of Carol Spaulding-Kruse, Professor of English at Drake, is a community publisher that adopts local book projects, works on them through curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for students, and publishes these projects to the benefit of a local non-profit. In the case of *A Spectrum of Faith*, the local book project was one that was begun by Tim Knepper, Professor of Philosophy at Drake and Director of The Comparison Project (a public program in comparative religion and interfaith dialogue), and Bob Blanchard, city planner and photographer extraordinaire. The non-profit beneficiary is the food-pantry network of the Des Moines Area Religious Council, which has seen over \$25,000 as of Fall 2017 from the sale of the book.

Drake students also wrote, edited, and designed this educational supplement. Grace Boatman wrote the chapters on the Islamic and Hindu communities; Kate Havens, on the Christian and Sikh communities; and Jon Lueth, on the Jewish and Buddhist communities. Professors Tim Knepper and Carol Spaulding-Kruse edited their writing as did students Sarah Mondello, Molly Adamson, and Amanda O'Malley. Sarah Mondello also designed this educational supplement.

All this work was undertaken so that *A Spectrum of Faith* could more easily be used in a variety of educational settings—everything from high schools, to colleges, to book clubs, to “Sunday Schools.” We believe *A Spectrum of Faith* has much to teach—in words and in photos—about the rich diversity of religion and culture in central Iowa. But learning is always more enjoyable and productive when it is done with others—hence, an educational supplement with questions for discussion.

The chapters of this education supplement correspond to the chapters of *A Spectrum of Faith*. Each chapter features eight sets of questions for discussion. The first concerns a quote from the corresponding chapter of *A Spectrum of Faith*; the second, a photo. Two questions then follow about chapter themes, two about further reflections, and two about life applications. We hope these questions will help you encounter and engage the religious communities every bit as much as their student researchers did.

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ABOUT A *SPECTRUM OF FAITH*

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IOWA COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

We believe *A Spectrum of Faith* can serve an indispensable educational use in the public school systems, especially in Iowa. Here, we list the relevant Iowa Core standards for 9th–12th grade Social Studies.

Behavioral Sciences: Sociology Strand

- **Recognize the Interaction and Influence between Individuals and Various Groups**
 - **SS-Soc.9-12.13.** Explain the formation of groups and the creation and development of societal norms and values.
 - **SS-Soc.9-12.14.** Identify characteristics of groups, and the influences that groups and individuals have on each other.
 - **SS-Soc.9-12.15.** Distinguish patterns and causes of stratification that lead to social inequalities, and their impact on both individuals and groups.
 - **SS-Soc.9-12.16.** Examine and evaluate reactions to social inequalities, including conflict, and propose alternative responses.

Behavioral Sciences: Psychology Strand

- **Recognize the Interaction and Influence between Individuals and Various Groups**
 - **SS-Psy.9-12.13.** Explain how social, cultural, gender, and economic factors influence behavior and human interactions in societies around the world.
 - **SS-Psy.9-12.14.** Examine how an individual's involvement in a collective group can influence their individual thoughts and behaviors.
 - **SS-Psy.9-12.15.** Analyze the influence different individual members of a group can have on the collective thought and behavior of the group as a whole.

Geography

- **Analyze Human Population Movement and Patterns**
 - **SS-Geo.9-12.19.** Analyze the reciprocal relationship between historical events and the spatial diffusion of ideas, technologies, cultural practices and the distribution of human population.
 - **SS-Geo.9-12.20.** Assess the impact of economic activities and political decisions on urban, suburban, and rural regions.

United States History

- **Recognize the Interaction Between Individuals and Various Groups**
 - **SS-US.9-12.14.** Evaluate the impact of gender roles on economic, political, and social life in the U.S.
- **Analyze Human Population Movement and Patterns**
 - **SS-US.9-12.17.** Explain the patterns of and responses to immigration on the development of American culture and law.
 - **SS-US.9-12.18.** Analyze the effects of urbanization, segregation, and voluntary and forced migration within regions of the U.S. on social, political, and economic structures.

World History

- **Recognize the Interaction Between Individuals and Various Groups**
 - **SS-WH.9-12.13.** Describe the impact of culture and institutions on societies.
- **Analyze Human Population Movement and Patterns**
 - **SS-WH.9-12.19.** Explain the influence of human migrations on patterns of settlement and culture.
- **Analyze Change, Continuity, and Context**
 - **SS-WH.9-12.20.** Evaluate methods used to change or expand systems of power and/or authority.
 - **SS-WH.9-12.21.** Investigate cultural advancements within societies with attention to belief systems, ideologies, the arts, science and technology.
 - **SS-WH.9-12.22.** Analyze the influence of social, political and economic developments on gender roles and social status.

Ezan: Islamic and Educational Center

In this chapter, you read powerful stories of perseverance about the congregation of Ezan. Many members of this community emigrated as refugees from the city of Srebrenica after the genocide in 1995. Although they have made new lives for themselves in the United States, the members of Ezan have not left their past behind. They proudly maintain their cultural traditions and religious practices, while faithfully remembering the victims of Srebrenica and solemnly vowing that it should never happen again. Keep the identity of Ezan in mind as you consider the following questions.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“They have stifled the urge to remain mournful and instead have transformed their tragedy into a chance to grow as individuals, as devout Muslims, and together as a community in their adopted homeland. Here, Muslim identity is a point of pride, not a badge of inferiority” (2).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Consider the photograph on page 6, which was taken at the twenty-year commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide. The photo shows some of the elderly female members of the mosque, women who likely lost a son, husband, or brother to the genocide. In the photo these women are wearing a white-and-green-colored flower pin, which is the symbol for the Srebrenica genocide. As Ezan’s imam Nijaz says, “The flower is a symbol of love, our revenge is the prayer not to allow Srebrenica to happen again to anyone.” What characteristics of Ezan does this photograph suggest? What emotions does this photograph evoke for you and why?





THEMES

1. A strong characteristic of this community is perseverance. Consider the obstacles this group of people encountered in coming to the United States such as language barriers or a credentialing system that doesn't recognize their professional degrees. How might this impact their practice of religion? Their daily life?
2. This community in particular and Muslims in general demonstrate deep religious devotion through practices such as fasting during the month of Ramadan and, in the case of women, wearing the hijab. What other examples of religious commitment and devotion do you find in this chapter? How does their experience as refugees affect their religious practice (and vice versa)?

REFLECTIONS

1. Refer back to the descriptions of families that were affected by the Srebrenica genocide. Learn about the facts of the Srebrenica genocide and the Bosnian war. How does this awareness impact your view of Islam?
2. In this chapter, Matt describes how events that are celebratory to many Americans can act as a trigger to those who have experienced trauma. Refer back to the following quote from page 6 for guidance: "They try to ignore the cracks and pops of nearby firecrackers. For Americans, this signals the coming of the Independence Day holiday. But for Bosnians the sound is all too familiar: it's the sound of a city under siege." How does this awareness influence your view of this community? Discuss how this reflection made you feel.

APPLICATIONS

1. Matt described his experience of actively participating in Ramadan and his struggle to fast throughout the day. What challenging physical or mental discipline have you practiced in your own life? Why did you undertake these practices? With your own experience in mind, reach out to your local Muslim community to visit during Ramadan and to participate in Ramadan yourself if you are able. Consider how doing so would enrich your understanding of Islam.
2. How do you imagine it would feel being a refugee uprooted from your country or having to travel to a foreign country because your home is no longer safe? The people of Ezan express deep gratitude to the United States for the safe home they have found here. What do you see as Americans' ethical responsibility to these refugees? Challenge yourself to get involved with local refugee communities and build relationships with those individuals.

Wat Phothisomphan

In this chapter, you learned about the Theravada Buddhist community of Wat Phothisomphan. The roots of this community go back to the late 1970s, when Laotian refugees began settling in Des Moines. In the 1980s these refugees opened the first Lao Buddhist temple, Wat Lao Buddhavas. Not until much later, in 2010, was a second Lao Temple established, the temple that is featured in this chapter, Wat Phothisomphan. Still, this “new” Lao temple continues to preserve not only the original teachings of the historical Buddha but also traditional Lao culture. After reading the chapter, discuss the following questions.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“There are many forms of blessings that you can ask for... for your friends, family, and even enemies. I practice loving kindness meditation, so I always say these four: May I be healthy, may I be free from danger, may I be happy, may I be able to love with ease!” (14).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Meditation is a key practice in Buddhism. The fact that this community is named Wat Phothisomphan—literally, “meditation temple”—indicates the importance of meditation there. Reflect on the photo of Kate Phanmaha meditating on page 13. What feelings does this image evoke and why? What does this photo suggest about the practices and goals of Buddhism?





THEMES

1. Much like other immigrant religious communities, the members of Wat Phothisomphan place a lot of emphasis on the preservation of their cultural and religious traditions and practices. Second-generation immigrants, however, often feel more connected to American customs and values. Why do you think this is the case? What, if anything, should be done about it? Will all the immigrant religions in the U.S. become “Americanized” over time?
2. Staying true to the teaching or truth (*dharma*) of the historical Buddha is of central concern to the community at Wat Phothisomphan. How do they do so? And why?

REFLECTIONS

1. As mentioned above, “phothisomphan” literally means “meditation.” Wat Phothisomphan is unique in its attempt to have meditation play a larger role in the life of its community. How do they do this? Why do they do this? To what extent do you think it is effective?
2. Religious symbols are prominent in the spaces and practices of Wat Phothisomphan. How do these symbols help the community “stay true”? What other functions do they serve? How important are religious symbols to religious practice?

APPLICATIONS

1. How did Samboun’s son work to learn more about the roots of his practices and beliefs? How important to you are the roots of your practices and beliefs? What are some ways you could, like Samboun’s son, work to learn more about the roots of your practices and beliefs?
2. What does the phrase “to be true to original teaching” mean to you? Is fidelity to original teaching important to you? Why or why not?

Greek Orthodox Church of St. George

In this chapter, you read about Des Moines' oldest Orthodox Christian church: the Greek Orthodox Church of St. George. These days there are a variety of Orthodox Christian churches in Des Moines: Serbian, Russian, Coptic (Egyptian), Eritrean, and more. But St. George's remains the oldest and best known. At the same time, however, the Orthodox Church in general remains the least well known branch of Christianity in Des Moines (if not also in the U.S.), despite the fact that it is arguably the earliest form of Christianity. (Orthodox Christians sometimes call Catholic Christians the "first protestants.") Unlike many other Christian branches and denominations, Orthodox Christians have a distinct way of worshipping, which includes fidelity to the tradition and engagement of the whole body. And yet, even in Orthodox Christianity, accommodations to modernity must be made. Keep all this in mind as you answer the following questions.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

"When we offer the bread and wine to God," explains Father Basil, "it is like a child offering a dandelion to their parent: The parent doesn't need the dandelion, and God doesn't need the bread and wine, but the parent accepts the gift in love" (23).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Branches and denominations of Christianity differ in how they view icons. In order to avoid idolatry, some Christian churches do not support the use of icons. However, the use of icons in the Orthodox Church goes back to the earliest centuries of Christianity. Orthodox Christians believe that icons are "windows unto the divine" that serve a biblically sound and spiritually nurturing role. How does the photo on page 18 make you feel? Why?





THEMES

1. Newspaper clippings and photo books show the changes that have occurred at St. George over the years. Why would history and tradition be so important to a congregation like St. George? Is it equally important to all religious traditions and communities? When do religious traditions and communities need to hold on to the past? When do they need to move beyond it?
2. Color plays a significant role in the services at St. George. Specifically, vestments and robes change color based on what is happening in the service or what season or day it is. Why might color be used in this way? What other senses does the Orthodox liturgy appeal to? Compare the multi-sensory nature of Orthodox Christianity with other religious communities in this book.

REFLECTIONS

1. While icons and imagery are an important element inside St. George, consider other religions, such as Islam, that forbid imagery in their spaces of worship. What might be the reasoning behind having or not having icons and imagery? When does an icon become an idol?
2. Throughout St. George's history, the amount of Greek used during services has progressively decreased, as more and more English is incorporated into the liturgy. Why might some members prefer this change? Why might others dislike it?

APPLICATIONS

1. Different cultures and traditions exist within the Orthodox Church, but the main practices and beliefs of Orthodox Christianity hold it together. What do your relationships look like with people who have the same basic beliefs and values but manifest them in different ways? How would those relationships change if you applied St. George's model for maintaining cohesion despite differences?
2. How does Jamie, the college student, apply her Orthodox Christian faith in her life? Compare this to the application of faith by other individuals featured in this book. What significant similarities and differences exist? How do you apply your faith or lack thereof?

Hindu Cultural and Educational Center

This chapter introduces you to a refugee community from Bhutan that is striving to preserve their cultural heritage and practice their Hindu religion in Des Moines. Although many members of the community have been in Des Moines for over a decade, they still hold their weekly *bhajan* services in the basements of community members. Recently, though, they have purchased a plot of land in southwest Des Moines and are currently raising money to build a temple and community center on it. Keeping this community's background in mind, discuss the following questions.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

"For Pratima, religion is 'love and hope and faith. It's something that combines us all for who we are today and what we can be in the coming days. It's definitely family as well; it unites us all'" (29).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

The photograph on page 29 shows members of the Hindu Cultural and Educational Center dancing during a *bhajan* service in the basement of a community member's home. Refer back to Taylor's vivid description of these *bhajan* services. Now, challenge yourself to find a recording of music that may be played at a Hindu *bhajan*. Listen to the music as you imagine yourself with the community in the pictures you see in this chapter. What colors, movements, or other sensations come to mind? Do you experience anything similar to this in your own life? How does this form of worship compare or contrast with other kinds of worship you have participated in or observed?





THEMES

1. Sacred space is a theme throughout this photo-documentary, from religious communities practicing in traditional places of worship, to re-purposed buildings such as office parks or car dealerships serving as worship spaces. The members of the Hindu Cultural and Educational Center currently take turns holding worship in different members' basements every weekend. What does it take to create a sacred worship space? What do sacred spaces mean to you? Can they be made, or must they be found?
2. The families that comprise the Hindu Cultural and Educational Center came to the United States as refugees. Therefore, the *bhajan* service functions not just as an opportunity for worship but also as a space for the group to share experiences and resources about the challenges of daily life in a foreign place. As Pratima shared with Taylor, members might need help accessing social services or supporting the elderly, who often struggle to adjust in their new environment. Even with programs in place to aid refugees and with communities to lean on for support, a high suicide rate prevails among Bhutanese refugees. Discuss why this is so. What could be done to decrease the number of suicides among this population?

REFLECTIONS

1. Recall Pratima's story of being born and raised in a Nepali refugee camp, then moving to the United States at the age of 14. Take some time to consider yourself in the same situation. How would these events shape you and your identity? What influence would they have on your religious and cultural practices?
2. Taylor's description of the Bhajan service creates a picture of what you would see and hear if you were to attend. The harmonium, *tabla* drum, and hand-held cymbals keep the beat for all the devotees to sing along in time. When the music moves them, individual members will get up to dance. What else do you notice about the images of worship in this chapter? As Tanka states, "Yes, it is a jubilant celebration, but it is also the practice of religion free from persecution." Are there echoes of any American traditions in such a statement?

APPLICATIONS

1. Taylor discussed how many members of the Hindu Cultural and Educational Center resettled in Seattle, Washington, only later to move to Des Moines for lower living costs, greater economic opportunities, and the ability to live close to one another. Think of your own situation. What might compel you to live in Iowa? Would any of your personal reasons line up with those of these Bhutanese Hindus? Many of these members also used community services such as Lutheran Services of Iowa (LSI) when they arrived so that they could learn English and become knowledgeable about their rights. Challenge yourself to volunteer in similar programs to witness what refugees and immigrants experience first-hand (and of course also to meet new people and develop new friendships).
2. Many of the communities in *A Spectrum of Faith* plan to build or have built an educational center along with their religious space. What similarities do you find between the religious communities who want or have an educational center? Why do you believe this is a common desire among these religious communities? How could you become involved in educational centers in your community?

Tifereth Israel Synagogue

In this chapter, you learned about the Conservative Judaism of Tifereth Israel Synagogue. The chapter features the long and rich history of the community, eventually culminating in their current synagogue at 924 Polk Blvd. This building is strikingly modern, while also providing a home for the practices and traditions of the past. In this way, the synagogue itself is much like the community who worships there as well as Conservative Judaism in general—faithful to the traditions of the past and open to the changes of the future, yet *conservative* when it comes to such change. After reading the chapter, discuss the following.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“Individuals ‘come to Judaism on their own terms.’ This means ‘those belonging to the faith can certainly decide how much they follow it’” (37).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPHS

Over the course of the Jewish year, the members of Tifereth Israel Synagogue read the Torah from beginning to end. After the last passage of the Torah is read, they dance with the Torah at the fall festival Simchat Torah. View the photographs on pages 32 and 125. Both depict members of Tifereth dancing with the Torah Scrolls and parading them through the synagogue. We know that the Torah is of central importance to this community, as it is the “literal word of God, handwritten and carefully sewn together on parchment.” What emotions do these photos elicit and why?





THEMES

1. In this chapter, celebration of the *bat mitzvah* rite-of-passage and the festival of *Purim* suggest that preservation of tradition is a key element of the practice of faith at Tifereth Israel Synagogue. In what ways is this preservation of tradition harmonious with contemporary social mores and values? In what ways might these ideals be at odds?
2. When considering whether to move to yet another new location or to renovate their existing one, the community at Tifereth decided to stay and renovate. How might this decision have been shaped by the history of the community in particular and of Judaism in general?

REFLECTIONS

1. Why is the STEP program so important to Tifereth Israel Synagogue? In what ways does this program reconcile past and present? In what other ways does Tifereth reconcile past and present? Why is the reconciliation of past and present so important for religion in general? Is it equally important in all religious traditions?
2. Equality is crucially important in Tifereth Israel Synagogue. How do the writing and photographs of the chapter demonstrate this? How do they fail to demonstrate this? Is equality in Judaism in particular and religion in general relatively new or age old? Which aspects of religion are conducive to equality? Which aspects of religion are limiting of equality?

APPLICATIONS

1. Consider the importance of tradition to a community. How and when does tradition change? Is it possible to change tradition without compromising integrity? Is there an area of your own life where you have taken a stance for change or held fast to tradition in the face of change? How do you need to preserve your traditions? How do you need to change them?
2. Consider the importance of education to a community. In what ways and to what ends do communities educate their members? In what ways and to what ends do communities restrict the education of their members? What is your role in the education of your community?

Tu Viện Hồng Đức

In this chapter, you learned about the Mahayana Buddhist community of Tu Viện Hồng Đức. This community blends two forms of Mahayana Buddhism—Pure Land and Zen—with their Vietnamese traditions and culture. This unique blending of religion and culture rests at the core of Tu Viện Hồng Đức’s identity. From their treatment of animals to their observance of holidays, community members strive to apply their beliefs and traditions to all aspects of their lives. After reading the chapter on Tu Viện Hồng Đức, consider the following:

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“As a *bodisattva* of compassion, Quan Âm resides in every one of us, Thầy explained and Hiếu translated. We can—indeed, we must—become ‘Quan Âm’s’ for those in need” (46).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

After attaining nirvana, the historical Buddha taught *dharma* (doctrine or truth) for approximately 40 years, making disciples who would lead the community after his death. Today, dharma-talks remain a fundamental part of Buddhist practice, the means by which Buddhist principles and practices are passed down through time. In the photo on page 43, Thầy is delivering a dharma-talk to the congregation at Tu Viện Hồng Đức. Examine this photo closely. What does it show us about the importance of teaching in Buddhism in general and at Tu Viện Hồng Đức in particular?





THEMES

1. Preservation of culture is clearly important to this community. What are some of the ways the chapter on Tu Viện Hồng Đức makes this evident? How effective do you think the community is at preserving their culture in second- and third-generation immigrants? Why is the preservation of culture so important to Tu Viện Hồng Đức?
2. Imitating the compassion and care of the bodhisattva Quan Âm is something community members strive for in their daily lives. What are some ways they apply the example of Quan Âm? What other religious communities in this book emphasize models and applications of compassion and care?

REFLECTIONS

1. How does Tu Viện Hồng Đức understand its relationship with the non-human world? How do they enact this understanding through practice? Consider the stories of the leftover food and the pet-store eel. What does this relationship suggest about the values and ideals of Buddhism more generally? Is Buddhism a unique religion in this regard? How or how not?
2. Religious imagery is mentioned throughout the chapter. Which images stood out to you and why? How is this imagery important to religious practice at Tu Viện Hồng Đức? How is it important to Buddhism more generally? Why is the absence of imagery important to other religions, especially those featured in this book? What is the connection between religious imagery and religious practice?

APPLICATIONS

1. What can you learn from Tu Viện Hồng Đức's exemplification of Quan Âm? Should you also strive to be like Quan Âm? How can you do so?
2. Think about the rich cultural history of this community and the ways in which they preserve their cultural traditions. What is your relationship to your cultural traditions? Do you preserve them? Should you?

Sikhs of Iowa Khalsa Heritage, Inc.

In this chapter, you read about many different forms of dedication exhibited by the Sikhs of Iowa Khalsa, Inc. (SIKHI). There is their dedication simply to practice their religion; this is no easy feat since Sikhs believe that they should tithe their time to God, spending about 2.5 hours each day in prayer, meditation, and scripture reading. There is also their dedication to raise the funds to build a temple in Johnston, Iowa; this is also no easy feat, especially for a smallish community of immigrants. And there is the dedication to be a community that welcomes all people, no matter their religion or background; this too would *seem* to be no easy feat, were it not a bedrock belief and value of Sikhs. Keep this multi-faceted dedication in mind as you answer the following questions about SIKHI.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“No matter how we label ourselves, ‘we are all the same.’ *Satnam Waheguru* teaches that, ‘We are all united in our humanity. We are all united in our seeking of God’” (55).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Look at the photo on page 52 of SIKHI’s *langar* hall. The first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak, is credited with establishing the use of *langar*, a common kitchen where food is served to all. Nanak rejected the influence of the caste system, where people of different castes do not eat together. These days, *langars* are some of the best attended community meals in the world. The Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar (India) feeds around 60,000 people each weekday and double that number each day of the weekend. How does this photo make you feel? Why?





THEMES

1. It would be easy for a group as small as SIKHI to keep to themselves; however, SIKHI enjoys introducing visitors to their religion and explaining their practices, values, and beliefs. (Of course, they love to feed visitors too!) Why might outreach be part of SIKHI? How does SIKHI's outreach compare with the forms and motivations of outreach in other religious traditions and communities?
2. Sikhism's history is filled with suffering and violence from religious persecution. How do Sikhs in general and the members of SIKHI in particular respond to their history? What lessons can be learned from Sikhs and their history of persecution?

REFLECTIONS

1. Reflect on the teachings of the 10th Guru, as relayed by Kanwarpal Dhugga: "He taught that you cannot turn the other cheek forever . . . otherwise, you will go extinct. He said you need to stand up, but the only battles you will fight will be in self-defense" (51). When, if at all, do religious people need to stand up for their values, practices, and beliefs? How should they do so? Why?
2. Meghan repeatedly describes how SIKHI considers Iowa to be welcoming and open-minded. Do you perceive Iowa to be this way? How has Iowa been welcoming and open-minded? How has it not?

APPLICATIONS

1. Equality is a central belief in Sikhism. Sikhs believe that all people can participate in their religion, regardless of race, gender, or class. Where do you see the most equality in your life? Where do you see the most inequality? How can Sikhism inspire you to address inequalities?
2. SIKHI is a very devoted faith community. For many members of the community, devotion is part of their daily lives. What are some examples of this? What are examples of devotion in your own life? In what ways do you need to be more devoted? How can you achieve this?

Islamic Center of Des Moines

In this chapter, you read a detailed picture of the community at the Islamic Center of Des Moines (ICDM). You learned their history as the oldest mosque in Des Moines. You experienced their diversity as an “Islamic Center” that attracts Muslims of many different cultures and nationalities. You witnessed the negative prejudices and stereotypes that they often encounter in Des Moines. And you glimpsed their determination to correct misrepresentations of Islam and teach its peaceful nature. Keep all this in mind in answering the following questions.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

Many people are curious about traditional Muslim clothing, especially the *hijab* worn by women. With this in mind, consider the following quote: “Another member of the ICDM, Arabic professor Nahed Waly, affirms this sentiment: ‘This is my religion, and these are my clothes,’ Dr. Waly explains. ‘This is my face, this is my shape. You must accept me as I am’” (59).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPHS

Consider the photograph on page 58 depicting the man engaging in voluntary prayer before the nighttime prayer (*isha*). Also consider the photograph on page 61 showing Muhammad Basheer performing ritual cleansing (*wudu*) before *isha*. Think about the importance of the daily prayers for Muslims as depicted in these photographs. What do these photographs convey about the practices and principles of Islam?





THEMES

1. Many members of ICDM have encountered explicit or implicit acts of Islamophobia in America. What are some examples from this chapter? What are some other ways in which American Muslims have encountered negative prejudices and stereotypes in their daily lives and religious practices? What are the sources of these prejudices and stereotypes? What are their effects?
2. Like many mosques in the United States, ICDM is made up of a diverse group of immigrants and refugees, as well as African-Americans and European-Americans. This makes the practice of Islam in the United States different from what many Muslim immigrants and refugees experienced in their country of origin. How does ICDM in particular and American Islam in general overcome these differences? How is ICDM “defined by its inclusivity, a ‘house of God’ for everyone” (58)?

REFLECTIONS

1. Consider the tree analogy described by Fayiz Abusharkh on page 59: “‘There is no God but Allah,’ he begins, ‘and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.’ This statement is the Muslim creed. Fayiz then explains the five tenets of Islam—the roots that give rise to the tree (the *Sunnah*), which comprises the sayings and doings of the prophet, Muhammad. The tree’s branches and fruits, which also bear symbolic significance, complete the picture of a fully faithful Muslim.” Does the analogy capture your understanding of Islam? How might it be used to understand other religions? What are the roots, trunk, branches, and fruits of the religions of the world?
2. Consider the quote on page 63: “But they’re not immune, either. Upon finding out she was Muslim, one of Ramla’s classmates tried, respectfully, to express her concerns. ‘No offense,’ her classmate said, ‘but I think the refugees are carrying bombs.’ In other words, politically charged conversations are a matter of course. Omran, a 12-year old student born in Baghdad, raised his hand to ask me how I felt about Presidential candidate Donald Trump. A prolonged conversation ensued on the perceptions of Muslims in America. Despite the serious tone of the topic, the students’ optimistic laughter filled the room.” Have you discussed the current climate in the United States towards Islam with your children or the children in your life? Think about how children perceive the world around them. Where and how do they get their information? The children of today will be our future leaders. What type of rhetoric do you think they should they be hearing, and what kind of actions should they be seeing?

APPLICATIONS

1. Consider Dustin’s depiction of the sermon (*khutba*) by ICDM’s imam, Yunnis Yunnis: “Following this quiet time, the imam Yunnis Yunnis delivers an impassioned sermon addressing what it means to be Muslim in America. He encourages his congregation to engage in peaceful conversation with others to dispel the negative rhetoric surrounding Islam. ‘Minds will be changed upon seeing the great humility of Islam lived properly,’ he says” (59). The media has a lot of control over how Islam is portrayed to the United States. Think of other sources that have a large impact on how U.S. citizens interpret Islam. After reading this chapter and the other two chapters on Muslim communities (Ezan, Masjid an-Noor) consider the accuracy of these sources with regard to the nature and practice of Islam.
2. Where and how did members of the community experience the prejudice and stereotyping they describe in this chapter? Do you see this as a kind of religious persecution? Consider other religions that have been persecuted throughout history. What happened to those groups when others decided to be silent?

Basilica of St. John

In this chapter, you read about the grand, ornate architecture of the Basilica of St. John and the large, diverse congregation that worships there. This grandeur is one important reason why St. John's was not only added to the National Registry of Historical Places but also appointed as a minor basilica in the 1980s. This grandeur might also be one important reason why the Basilica of St. John continues to attract such a large and diverse congregation. Not surprisingly, this chapter also contains some personal reflections by its author, Tierney Grisolano, who struggled to feel like an insider at a church as large and diverse as St. John's. Keep all this in mind as you discuss the following questions.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

"That's the whole point of religion as Father Reynaldo sees it: to help us live in peace with others who are different from us, to love others—all others" (69).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Within the United States, many Christians stand when receiving the Eucharist. But a debate has existed among members of the global Catholic Church whether one should kneel or stand, or whether both are acceptable. Consider the photo on page 68. What do you imagine to be the parishioner's reasons for kneeling to receive the Eucharist? How do you think kneeling to receive the Eucharist makes him feel? How does this photo make you feel? Why?





THEMES

1. St. John's sanctuary is large and ornate. What does its size and opulence make you feel about its purpose? Now, compare St. John's sanctuary with its chapel. How might the smaller size and simpler architecture of the chapel be used for different purposes than the sanctuary?
2. "Diverse" was a common word in this chapter. Indeed, it is a common word in many chapters in this book. Compare the diversity of St. John's with that of Masjid an-Noor or the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center or Tifereth B'nai Jeshurun. How in each case is diversity encouraged and embraced? How in each case is similarity or uniformity of belief and practice nevertheless maintained?

REFLECTIONS

1. Why do you think St. John's congregation has seen a steady growth, while many other Catholic congregations have been declining? How do these reasons compare with the reasons for the growth of other religious traditions and communities, especially Evangelical Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism?
2. St. John's describes itself as conservative. What does conservative mean in this case? What does it not mean? Which other communities in this book would you characterize as conservative? How does their conservatism compare to that of St. John's?

APPLICATIONS

1. You learned that rituals and the space in which they take place are vital to the Catholic Church in general and the Basilica of St. John in particular. Why is ritual and space so important to St. John's? Why is it so important in religion in general? Do you have your own "sacred" rituals and spaces? Should you?
2. Tierney was most moved by the "profound quiet" that occurs in several moments during a mass. Why might she have been so moved by the silence? What role does silence play in your spiritual life and practices? Spend some time this week just being silent.

Beth El Jacob

In this chapter, you learned about the Orthodox Judaism of the Beth El Jacob Synagogue. Of all the Jewish branches and communities featured in *Spectrum of Faith*, Orthodox Judaism and Beth El Jacob Synagogue strive most to practice the laws and traditions of Judaism as revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai and interpreted by the Jewish people over time. Nevertheless, neither Orthodox Judaism nor Beth El Jacob retreats from the modern world. Rather, they seek to bring the Judaism of the past into the present. Consider this dialectic in discussing the following.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“The main thing is that a person has a REAL connection to G-D that they can give over and instill in their children” (79).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Examine the photograph on page 123 of David Wolnerman, the last living Holocaust survivor in Iowa. In the chapter on Beth El Jacob, David’s rabbi, Rabbi Bolel, describes David as a staunchly faithful Jew. In the photo, David, wrapped in a prayer shawl (*tallit*), is reading from his prayer book (*siddur*) in the sanctuary of Beth El Jacob. What feelings does this photo evoke and why?





THEMES

1. Tradition, especially as expressed in the laws and traditions of Rabbinic Judaism, is paramount to the community at Beth El Jacob. How is this exemplified in the chapter on Beth El Jacob? What are some ways in which the importance of tradition does and does not come into conflict with modern values and ways at Beth El Jacob?
2. Education is crucially important to the members of Beth El Jacob, just as in most Jewish communities. How is education important to other religious traditions and communities? What is distinctive about the value of education in Jewish traditions and communities?

REFLECTIONS

1. As mentioned above, David Wolnerman is described by his rabbi as “a staunchly faithful Jew.” What does it mean to be a “staunchly faithful Jew” in your understanding? What traits and behaviors does such a person embody and practice? What other individuals from this book would you describe as “staunchly faithful”? What qualities do they have in common?
2. The community at Beth El Jacob has many symbols to remind them of the long tradition of their religion and community. How might these symbols reveal how the laws and traditions of Judaism can be practiced in the modern world? How do symbols in other religious traditions show how the traditions of the past can be practiced today?

APPLICATIONS

1. Given what you have learned about the community at Beth El Jacob and Orthodox Judaism in general, how might you work to attract more Jewish families to the congregation? What difficulties might you face? At what point would a dwindling congregation warrant a move to a smaller building? What challenges would this move present?
2. The emphasis on original meaning and practice is central to the community of Beth El Jacob. Think about moments in your life when your traditions and values were challenged, and consider how you responded to those situations. Did you adapt those traditions? What difficulties did you face in doing so?

Hindu Temple and Cultural Center

This chapter introduces you to the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center in Madrid, Iowa. The members of this temple emigrated from areas all over India; thus, the Temple houses statues (*murtis*) of many different Hindu deities—different deities for devotees from different areas of India. Nevertheless, all of the members of the Temple—or at least most of them—consider themselves to be Hindus. Keep this unity-in-diversity in mind as you discuss these questions.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“A place where the doors to your heart and mind are opened,’ Dr. Gupta says of the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center. It is a place to ‘look inside yourself,’ to ‘open your own mind to the Lord, the Supreme Being,’ and answer the three most important questions of life: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going?’” (87).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Notice that almost every single photograph in this chapter was taken outside—with the exception on the one on page 82. This photograph of Dr. Khimanand Upreti, the temple’s Shaivite priest, is the only photograph taken inside the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of Iowa. It was captured in the doorway leading into the sanctuary. Blurred behind Dr. Upreti is the shrine of one of the Hindu deities in the sanctuary. You can vaguely make out the columns framing the deity’s location, but the curtains have been drawn so that the deity can’t be seen. Taking pictures is not allowed inside the sanctuary where the deities reside. What do you think is the reasoning behind this rule? Now that you have a sense of what the inside of the Temple looks like, challenge yourself to visit it to experience its full magnificence.





THEMES

1. Hanna introduced you to Dr. Prem Sahai, an original member of this Hindu community who dreamed of a place of worship that Hindus could call their own. A cultural center was also one of Dr. Sahai's dreams which, sadly, he was unable to realize before his death. Think about the dedication of this community to bring the dream of a Hindu temple and cultural center to life. Discuss Dr. Sahai's vision of the Cultural Center being a place that could "decrease misunderstanding between religions and educate the community or the state as a whole in terms of what the different religions are and what the common grounds are."
2. Consider the diversity of deities and devotees at the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of Iowa. What makes them the gods and members of one and the same religion—Hinduism? Are these similarities ones of belief, practice, or way of life? How does the unity-in-diversity of Hinduism compare with that of other religions?

REFLECTIONS

1. Refer back to the Temple's openness to devotees and visitors throughout the day, as well as to its regularly scheduled weekly, monthly, and yearly rituals and festivals. Do you think this is a special quality of this particular Temple? Do you think temples in India are as open and follow the same schedule? Why or why not? What is distinctive about Hinduism in the United States?
2. Recall the tale Pratyusha Bujimalla tells about the brother deities Kartikaye and Ganesha. They were in a competition to win a necklace from their father, Lord Shiva. The brother who could run around the Earth three times the fastest would win. Ganesha knew he would lose, so instead of trying to run around the Earth three times, he walked around his parents three times. The moral of the story is to always have your family be the center of your world. What did you think when you read this part of the chapter? What similar stories are you familiar with from your own life? What morals or values are taught by the stories from your own religion?

APPLICATIONS

1. Refer back to Hanna's description of devotees participating in the *abhishekam*—the bathing of *murtis* in libations of milk, coconut water, honey, or *ghee* (clarified butter). How does this purification ritual compare to rituals from your own religion and the other religions in this book? Why is purification so important in religion? Is it important in your own life? Why or why not?
2. You read how Pragnya is a cultural ambassador for a local educational non-profit called CultureALL, through which she visits Des Moines area schools to "spread the word about Indian culture." How might you get involved with your local community to support cultural outreach programs? Now, challenge yourself to go out and do it!

Iowa Sikh Association

In this chapter, you read a remarkable story about the perseverance of the Iowa Sikh Association. A significant part of their history involves their search for a permanent space for worship. Throughout this process, they stayed true to time-consuming aspects of their faith, demonstrating that their faith is a matter of practice as much as belief. Indeed, the core constituents of their faith mostly concern bodily action: the “5Ks” are articles of faith that they wear; and the “3 Pillars” involve not just meditation on God’s name but also honest living and sharing and consuming together. As is the case with most religious traditions and communities, however, these traditions and practices sometimes get modified of necessity or convenience in modern society. Keep all this in mind as you discuss the following.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“There is neither Hindu nor Muslim, but only human. So whose path shall I follow? I shall follow God’s path. God is neither Hindu nor Muslim and the path which I follow is God’s” (90).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Sikh scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, is regarded not only as the supreme spiritual authority of Sikhism but also a living Guru. It is put to bed at night, woken up in the morning, and treated with the utmost care and respect. Look at the photo on page 94, where the *Guru Granth Sahib* is ornately decorated and adorned with swords to symbolize the *Khalsa*. How does this photo make you feel? Why?





THEMES

1. Sharing and togetherness are vital components of Sikh religion and lifestyle, as exemplified in their Third Pillar: “to share and consume together.” How does this differ from the emphases on sharing and togetherness in other religious traditions? What is the value of sharing and togetherness? When are they difficult to maintain?
2. What is the importance of having a permanent facility for religious practice and worship? Consider how the Iowa Sikh Association’s search for space may have affected their religious and personal lives. How does the practice of religion in permanent and dedicated facilities differ from the practice of religion in temporary and transient spaces?

REFLECTIONS

1. Sikhs around the world remain unified by observing the same practices, singing the same *shabads* (hymns), reciting the same *ardās* (prayers), and reading the same *hukamnama* (passage of the day). Why might this be significant? How do other religions encourage global togetherness?
2. As you read in this chapter, Sikh men sometimes choose to cut their hair, whether to fit in better with society or to find gainful employment. To what extent do you think this choice impacts their Sikh identity? What is the relationship between appearances and identity, especially with regard to religion?

APPLICATIONS

1. “Here, there is no distinction of social class or caste. All are equal, partaking of the same food as their neighbor. .” How does this core principle of Sikhism apply to your life? How could you practice your own version of “langar” in your community?
2. From what you have learned about Sikhism, how would you explain elements of the faith to a post-9/11 country? What would you feel is most necessary to explain? What challenges would you face? Now consider these questions from the perspective of a Sikh.

Masjid an-Noor

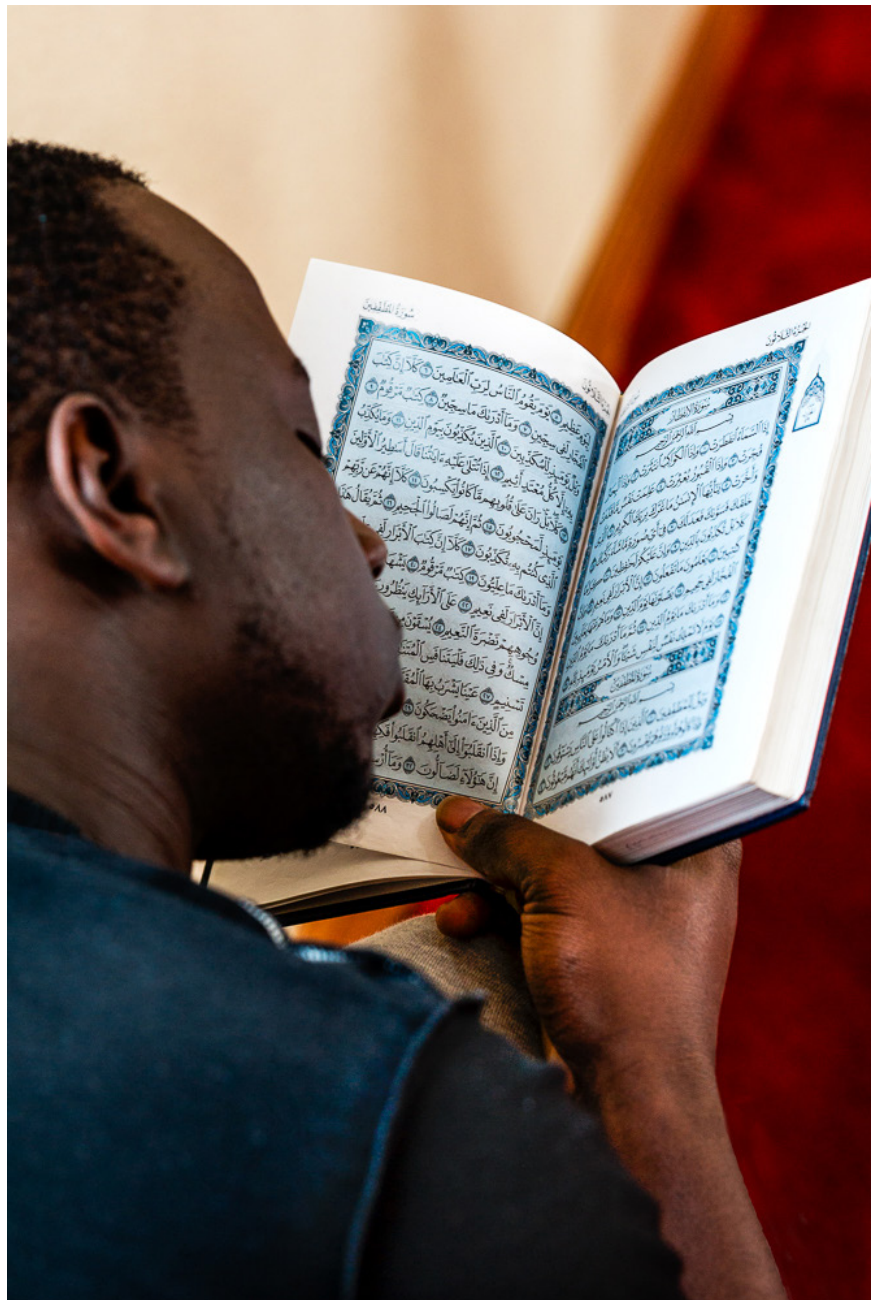
This chapter introduces you to a diverse Muslim community that offers a welcoming atmosphere for Muslims from a variety of countries and cultures, even for different sects of Islam. Diversity is a frequent theme in the chapter, as is Masjid an-Noor’s effort to provide a sacred and safe space for its diverse community. This effort has involved the transformation of a former Christian Church and Masonic Lodge into a mosque that can now scarcely hold all the worshippers who attend the Friday *juma’ah* service. Keep this history and diversity of Masjid an-Noor in mind as you discuss the following questions.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“He draws upon the Prophet Muhammad’s final sermon where he tells his followers, ‘All mankind is from Adam and Eve—an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over a black nor a black any superiority over a white except by piety and good action’” (98).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Consider the photograph on page 101 that depicts a member of Masjid an-Noor reading from the Qur’an. In a previous chapter, you were introduced to the community at the Islamic Center of Des Moines. In that chapter, you discussed the importance of the daily prayers in Islam. For this chapter, consider Muslim reverence for the Qur’an, as depicted in the photograph on page 101. Challenge yourself to look through a Qur’an, including one that has an English translation. Consider how the passages of this holy book inspire the reverence of the worshipper in this photograph.





THEMES

1. What role does culture play in religion? How does culture affect Islam? Think of ways in which culture affects other religions. Can religion and culture be separated from one another? Or are they always inextricably intertwined?
2. Consider John's description of the mosque's location and the building's former occupants. Imagine the experience of attending a mosque in a predominantly Christian neighborhood where the call-to-prayer is not publically sounded. What does such an absence say about the nature and value of Islam? Now, imagine the Muslim call-to-prayer sounding in Masjid an-Noor's neighborhood or in your own community. What would the presence of a public call-to-prayer say about the nature and value of Islam? (For perspective, look up the Muslim communities around Detroit, Michigan, where the call-to-prayer is publically sounded.)

REFLECTIONS

1. Recall Iqbal Rafi's experience with Shia Islam. His home country of Malaysia outlawed Shia Islam, so Iqbal only knew of Sunni Islam. After his exposure to different types of Islam, he feels that he is a better person. Are you familiar with the differences between a Sunni Muslim and a Shia Muslim? Why might they have difficulty worshipping together? Why might it be easier for them to worship together in America?
2. Reflect on the story of female American convert, Aisha. Why did she convert? How did she convert? What does her conversion suggest about the status of women in Islam? What does her conversion suggest about the future of Islam in America? Do you think increasing numbers of European-Americans will convert to Islam in the future? Why or why not?

APPLICATIONS

1. John talked about the "do-it-yourself" nature of this community that remodeled a former church to make it appropriate for Muslim worship. Muslim communities in the U.S. that "make do" with the buildings in which they find themselves worship in vastly different spaces compared to the elaborate mosques elsewhere around the world. Saving money, finding the right location, and finding creative ways to work with existing spaces are priorities born of necessity for many Muslim communities in America. What efforts would you, or do you, take in your own life to secure a sacred space?
2. On page 101, the text reads, "The faithful enter in bare feet...." What type of atmosphere does this evoke for you? What meaning does the act of ritual washing connote? If you practice religion, what do you do to prepare for worship? If you do not, where, if at all, do you set apart "sacred space"? How and why?

Temple B’nai Jeshurun

In this chapter, you learned about the Reform Jewish community at Temple B’nai Jeshurun. Two apparent tensions run through this chapter: between, on the one hand, the age-old traditions of Judaism and the progressive, twenty-first-century ideals of America; and, on the other hand, communal commitment and individual choice. Consider these apparent tensions as you discuss the following.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“We are going in the direction that our past has led us. Because of the nature of Reform Judaism as an individual-based religion that can go in all kinds of directions, if you have that grounding in history and understanding of it, you’re, in a sense, continuing what the people before you have done” (109–110).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Education is a critical aspect of Judaism. Numerous Jewish practices and festivals involve the explicit teaching of Jewish principles and practices to youth. Look again at the photo on page 111 of Rabbi Kaufman delivering the children’s sermon. What does this image convey about the importance of education in Judaism in general and at Temple B’nai Jeshurun in particular? What emotions does this image evoke?





THEMES

1. Temple B’nai Jeshurun stresses both the traditions of Judaism and progressive, contemporary ideals involving equality and justice. How does it balance these seemingly opposite commitments? In what contexts and for what reasons might it lean one way or the other?
2. Temple B’nai Jeshurun stresses both individual choice and community connection. How does it balance these seemingly opposite commitments? In what contexts and for what reasons might it lean one way or the other?

REFLECTIONS

1. Community and fellowship are central to the life of Temple B’nai Jeshurun. Is this unusual given Reform Judaism’s emphasis on individual choice and conscience? Compare the balance of individuality and community at Temple B’nai Jeshurun with those of other religious communities in this book. Which communities is the Temple most and least like in this regard? How do you explain these similarities and differences? What lessons can be learned about the balance of individuality and community in religion in general?
2. Nearly a full page of this chapter is dedicated to the description of Temple B’nai Jeshurun’s sanctuary. What distinguishes this space from the other spaces at the Temple? How and why are these distinctions important? How does the sanctuary at Temple B’nai Jeshurun compare to the sanctuary at St. John’s Basilica and, if you have seen it, the sanctuary at the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of Iowa? Does the magnificence of these sanctuaries serve similar religious goals and elicit similar religious emotions? If not, how are they different?

APPLICATIONS

1. Do you strive to balance fidelity to the traditions of the past with contemporary ideals and values? Should you? What challenges would you face in doing so? How would you meet these challenges?
2. Temple B’nai Jeshurun’s sanctuary is described as having a “special quality,” particularly with regard to “transformation.” Do you have such spaces in your life? Should you? How can you create them?

Burns United Methodist Church

In this chapter, you learned about the predominately African-American congregation at Burns United Methodist—the first African-American church in Iowa (by most accounts). Several themes emerged throughout the chapter. Family and fellowship are significant components of Burns, as is living out Christian beliefs and values. Together, the congregation strives to exemplify their Christian faith through traditional practices and dynamic actions. Burns’ congregation readily acknowledges its imperfections, yet it remains devoted to its mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” Reflect on these themes as you discuss the following questions.

DISCUSS QUOTATION

“‘I practice Christianity through those I come across and my family,’ says member Harvey Andrews, who was raised within the Methodist church. For Mr. Andrews, becoming a member at Burns meant familiarity through practice” (114).

DISCUSS PHOTOGRAPH

Immigrant African Christians have infused themselves into American Christianity, often with a distinct cultural and spiritual flair. In some cases, African immigrants begin their own churches or congregations; in other cases, they join existing churches and congregations, like Burns United Methodist. When the latter happens, different cultural traditions and worship styles get introduced into churches that typically already have a cultural identity and style of worship. Look at the photo on page 117. How does it make you feel? Why?





THEMES

1. What does it mean for Burns United Methodist Church to be a “loving family?” What other religious communities in this book would you characterize as “loving families”? How do these “families” remain loving through disagreement and challenge?
2. The Burns congregation has a strong identity. Members identify themselves in several ways, primarily as Christian, Methodist, and African-American. Why do you think identity is significant to the Burns congregation? It is as significant or more significant at Burns than at other religious communities in this book? Why?

REFLECTIONS

1. Music is extremely important to Burns (despite the fact that they are often without a pianist or organist!). This is not the case for all the religious traditions and communities in this book. In some instances, music is even forbidden or discouraged in religious services. How do you explain the differing value and function of music in religion?
2. Do you think there is pride within the Burns congregation? If so, what do you think is its nature or cause? How does the pride of Burns compare to the pride that is no doubt felt by many of the other religious communities in this book? When is pride about religion, culture, and race one and the same? When is it different?

APPLICATIONS

1. “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” How can you apply these famous words of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism?
2. With what you know about Burns, how would you try to get more youth involved in the congregation? What challenges would you face? What strategies would you employ? What goals would you set?



"... you hold in your hands a beautiful collection of photos and essays of the 'City on a Hill' that is Des Moines, Iowa. ... I look through these pages with admiration, seeing in what you have built something that I believe cities all over the United States and the world should seek to emulate."

—From Eboo Patel's Foreword

A Spectrum of Faith invites readers on a vivid pictorial journey into the diverse religious communities of greater Des Moines. Explore the south-side office park transformed into a Buddhist monastery or the Basilica in the city's center named to the National Registry of Historic Places; discover the Hindu temple rising above the cornfields of nearby rural Madrid, or the mosque, temple, or gurdwara tucked away in a neighborhood near you.

These Iowans from the world's major faith traditions—Sikhism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam—extend the rich history of welcome in our state to readers of all faith backgrounds. Get to know the fascinating spectrum of individuals, traditions, and practices of the religious communities who call Iowa home.



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