

Religion and Belief Guide 2016/17



Dr Georgette Bennett of the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding speaking in February 2015

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Welcome



Welcome to LSE. You have joined an incredibly diverse community drawn from 140 countries.

Religion and belief is just one of the markers of our rich diversity with all the world's major religious traditions represented here. Religious groups generate a lot of community and charitable activity on campus, and the interfaith initiatives of the LSE Faith Centre provide wonderful opportunities to bring these groups together in dialogue and common purpose. But we are also aware that many students come from situations of religious conflict or oppression of religious minorities. We are keen that LSE is a place that does not import those conflicts but exports a model of peaceful coexistence around the world. To do that we all need to seek to understand and respect the religious identities, beliefs and practices of our fellow students, staff and colleagues. This guide provides practical information for the whole LSE community as well as a reference for adherents of particular religions about the beliefs and practices of those around us. I hope it will be of use to you in your time at the School.

Professor Janet Hartley
Chair of the LSE Faith Centre Advisory Board



Believing at LSE



Recent years have seen some very dramatic changes in LSE's provision for religion and belief.

In 2014 we opened our new state of the art Faith Centre in the Saw Swee Hock Student Centre. This is symbolic of a transition in the way religion is being engaged with across the higher education sector, arising from the incorporation of religion and belief into equality legislation and the increased prominence of religious issues on campus. So we are proud to say that our new provision puts LSE at the forefront of these changes.

We have come to recognise the importance of religious identity to a large proportion of our students and staff and we are determined to create an environment on campus where religion can be fully observed and respected, as well as debated and challenged. None of this compromises the kind of secularity that has always characterised LSE, giving no privilege to any particular religious standpoint. But it is a recognition that religion is something that is not merely studied here; for many of today's staff and students it is also lived and practised.

In this guide you will find lots of information about the LSE Faith Centre, our acclaimed "Faith and Leadership" programme, our interfaith trips to Israel and Palestine and a new programme for this year on "Meaningful Work." At the back you will find our Religious Observance Policy and an interfaith calendar. The main body of the booklet sets out the beliefs and practices of six of the largest religious groups on campus and the concerns of atheists/humanists.

The information provided here is both for adherents of these traditions and to educate the rest of us in the worldviews of fellow members of our community. Given the restrictions of space we have included only those religions with organised representation on campus in the last year, which are also the main religions recognised in the UK Census 2011.

My role as Chaplain and Interfaith Adviser is to oversee all this provision and do all I can to make our campus a place where religion can be practised faithfully and where differing religious views can be discussed respectfully and constructively. So whoever you are, don't be afraid to contact me if you have a query or difficulty in relation to your religious identity and how you practise it at LSE.

I'm also available to talk to students of any faith or none pastorally about anything you want to discuss. I spent a long time being a student myself(!) so while there is a lot of fun to be had, I know it can sometimes be a tough time.

I hope this guide is useful and that you have a really good experience at LSE, growing in knowledge, in wisdom and (perhaps) in faith.

Revd Canon Dr James Walters
Chaplain and Senior Lecturer in Practice
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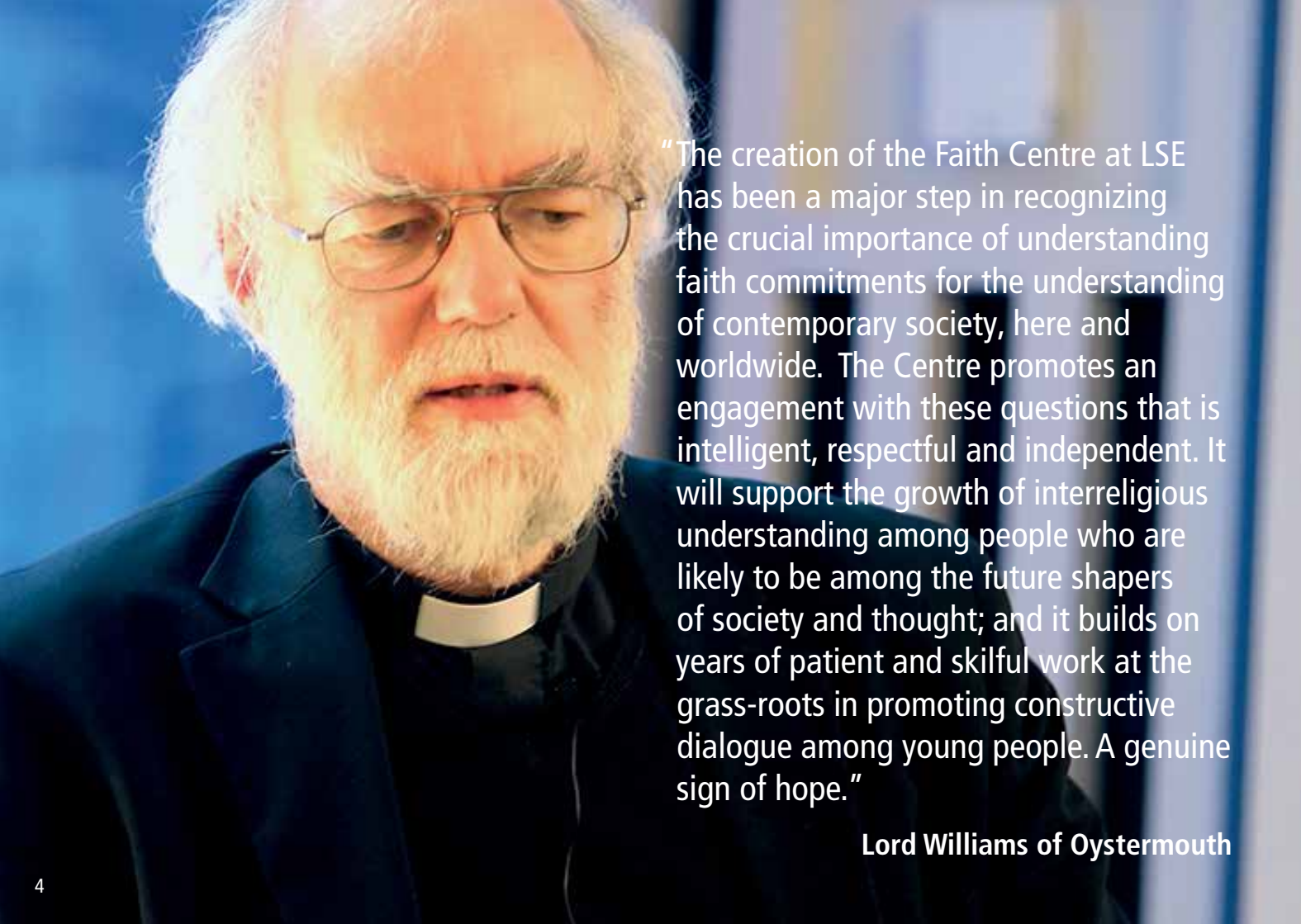
Mission Strands

Faith	Self	Society
Religious	Personal	Social

The Faith Centre's objectives are:

To equip students with interreligious understanding and the skills to be leaders in interfaith dialogue both on campus and in the wider world.	To expand students' experience in wellbeing, in spiritual development, and in awareness of their own life aspirations.	To engage in constructive community building across religious groupings among the student body and in wider society.
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“The creation of the Faith Centre at LSE has been a major step in recognizing the crucial importance of understanding faith commitments for the understanding of contemporary society, here and worldwide. The Centre promotes an engagement with these questions that is intelligent, respectful and independent. It will support the growth of interreligious understanding among people who are likely to be among the future shapers of society and thought; and it builds on years of patient and skilful work at the grass-roots in promoting constructive dialogue among young people. A genuine sign of hope.”

Lord Williams of Oystermouth

Faith Centre Spaces

The sacred desert

The theme of the LSE Faith Centre is the “sacred desert”. The desert is a place of spiritual significance in nearly all the world religions. From the ancient Hindu traditions of the Thar Desert of Rajasthan to the origins of the Judeo-Christian tradition at Sinai, the desert has been experienced as a place of profound religious intensity. Crucially, the nomadic tradition of the desert reflects the need for space to be shared and not colonised. But the desert has also been a place of inter-religious encounter, not least through commerce along trade routes. So our “sacred desert” is a place of stillness for all people, a place where different religious groups can “set up camp” for a while, but also a place for all to encounter people of other faiths, to hear their stories, to share hospitality and to converse about the issues of the day.

The idea of the desert is captured in our striking stained glass windows designed by the President of the Royal Academy of Art Christopher Le Brun. This world class work of art reflects the theme through an abstract interaction of colour that evokes both the contrasts of the desert and the dynamic of the interreligious encounter.

The cave

This is a secluded space available for quiet reflection and prayer.



Prayer rooms

Prayer and washing facilities for Muslim prayers.



The Desert Room

This room is used for many different activities including worship, discussion and meditation.



Reception

Find out more about activities, programmes and facilities at the Faith Centre.





Building bridges, making friends

LSE has an established programme of interfaith activities both on campus and in the wider community.

A range of different interfaith events, lectures, workshops and seminars are organised by the Faith Centre to foster interfaith understanding and explore religious issues in the world today. We host a wide range of speaker events and panel discussions with academics, faith leaders and politicians. We organise an informal programme for new students at LSE called Interfaith Buddies, which connects students across religious divides and offers an opportunity to make new friends and learn about other people's beliefs. We help students develop their involvement in charity and education work, and have organised fund raisers for Syrian Refugees and interfaith assemblies in local primary schools. We also design and implement transformational programmes for LSE students, most notably a week in Israel and Palestine for Muslims, Christians and Jews, and the LSE Faith and Leadership course.

Interfaith Encounter: Israel and Palestine

We take a group of 18 LSE students of different faiths and no faith to Israel and Palestine each year for a week, during which time we visit major sites of the Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths, and meet with local people working for peace across religious divides.

This trip is designed to improve participants' understanding of the complexities of the Israel and Palestine conflict, particularly its religious dimensions which are often neglected in political scientific analysis. We encourage the students to consider how their own religious commitments, drawn into dialogue with those of different traditions, may be a resource for peace-making and conflict resolution.

Students are given further opportunity to reflect more deeply on the region, its political and religious significance, in preparatory and follow-up workshops.



LSE Faith and Leadership

- Want to improve your knowledge of world faiths?
- Keen to develop your leadership skills?
- Want to meet men and women in positions of leadership from different faith backgrounds?

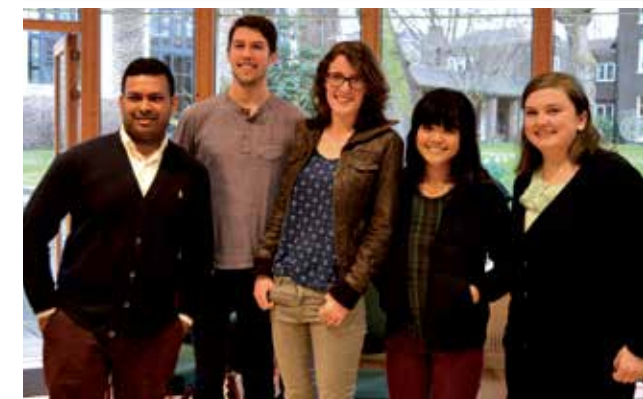
LSE Faith and Leadership is an extracurricular programme that will deepen your understanding of different religions, develop your leadership skills and enhance your CV.

LSE forms future leaders. Our students come from all over the world and go on to positions of leadership in business, finance, government and civil society. 34 have become world leaders. To lead successfully in today's world it is increasingly clear that you need a sophisticated understanding of religion. Three quarters of humanity now profess a religious faith. That is set to rise to 80 per cent by 2050. But we're increasingly aware that religion can be used for the bad as well as the good. The twenty-first century requires leaders who are sufficiently informed to understand the complex relation of religious narratives to social and political change and relate their own faith commitments wisely to the responsibilities they bear.

The course runs on Monday evenings in the Lent Term and includes one residential weekend. It comprises:

- Short, creative introductions to the main world faith traditions from expert scholars and community leaders.
- Consideration of the changing dynamics of religion in the world today and evolving models of secularism and religious pluralism.
- Training in decision-making, mediation and reconciliation by people experienced in the field.
- Sessions with leaders in the different sectors studied at LSE (eg, business, politics, law) from a range of different faith backgrounds.

Web: lse.ac.uk/faithcentre/faithandleadership





Wellbeing in the Faith Centre

The Faith Centre is also a well-being hub, hosting a range of activities such as Mindfulness, Yoga and Tai Chi.

Mindfulness is the psychological process of knowing directly what is going on inside and outside ourselves, moment by moment.

Deriving from Buddhist traditions, mindfulness encourages you to pay more attention to the present moment – to your own thoughts and feelings, and to the world around you. Evidence suggests that practising mindfulness can be beneficial to a person’s mental wellbeing, and as part of managing stress and anxiety.

Mindfulness, Yoga and Tai Chi classes are available for LSE staff and students.

Monday	12 noon	Mindfulness
Wednesday	6pm	Tai Chi
Thursday	8am	Tai Chi
	12 noon	Yoga
Friday	1pm	Ashtanga Yoga

Please see the Faith Centre diary or ask at Reception for more information on classes, suitable levels and timings. Please note, class times may be subject to change from term to term.

The Cave in the Faith Centre is also available to LSE staff and students who need a quiet oasis on campus for reflection or prayer.

Meaningful Work

The Faith Centre will be running a series of events and workshops on the subject of “Meaningful Work” in partnership with St Paul’s Institute, LSE Life and LSE Careers.

This programme will run during Michaelmas term 2016 and explores how to reconcile personal values and a sense of purpose with the demanding ambitions of modern professional life. Can everybody discover meaning in their work and does it necessarily mean a low income? Are some sectors more meaningful than others, or does every career have the potential for meaningful work? How can we respond proactively to our values and ambitions in our academic and professional development?

Meaningful Work will open with an interdisciplinary academic panel at LSE, followed by four workshops and a student-led closing event at St Paul’s Cathedral.



Buddhism

“Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love; this is the eternal rule.”

Siddhārtha Gautama Buddha

Beliefs

Buddhism teaches that life is unsatisfactory. Life can be experienced as painful and frustrating, impermanent and fleeting, or insubstantial. When we experience life as unsatisfying, we tend to crave pleasant experiences and avoid disappointing ones. We do this more or less habitually. Our habits tie us into a reactive cycle of craving and aversion. This exhausting cycle can be broken, when our experience is fully aligned with Reality. The Buddha taught that a way to break this cycle is to practise ethics and meditation, and to cultivate wisdom, which is a deep understanding and acceptance of things as they are.

The Triratna Buddhist Community (and Order) was established 45 years ago by Ven Urgyen Sangharakshita, an Englishman who was ordained as a Buddhist monk in India and practised there for 20 years before coming back to Britain. He created a new kind of Buddhist movement, which translates traditional Buddhist teachings into forms of practice appropriate for the modern world.

The Order emphasises equal ordination for men and women irrespective of their lifestyle. Commitment to spiritual practice is primary. Other key emphases are an ecumenical approach to traditional Buddhist teachings, spiritual friendship, and appreciation of the arts.


Customs and practices

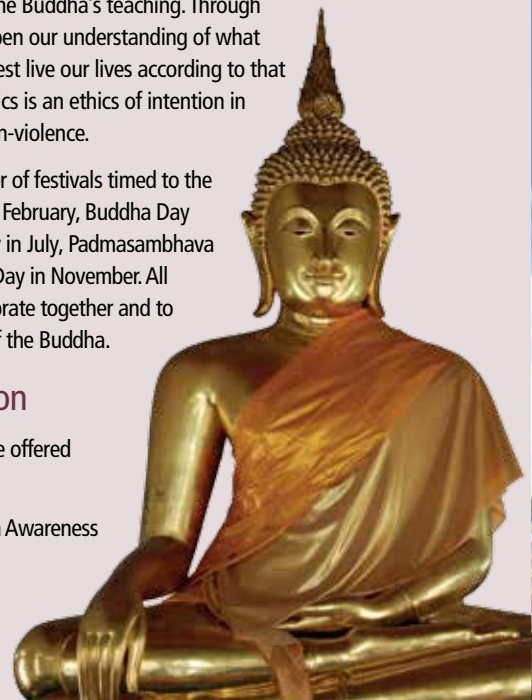
Meditation practices can be divided into samatha and vipassana practices. Samatha practices develop calm, concentration and positive emotion and are practised as Mindfulness of Breathing and Development of Loving Kindness (Metta Bhavana). Vipassana practices aim at developing insight into Reality. Developing and cultivating wisdom happens through studying and reflecting the Dharma, the Buddha’s teaching. Through study and reflection we deepen our understanding of what Reality is and how we can best live our lives according to that understanding. Buddhist ethics is an ethics of intention in which the key principle is non-violence.

Buddhists celebrate a number of festivals timed to the full moon: Parinirvana Day in February, Buddha Day (Wesak) in May, Dharma Day in July, Padmasambhava Day in October and Sangha Day in November. All are important events to celebrate together and to contemplate key teachings of the Buddha.

Practical information

Silent meditation sessions are offered during term time.

 Find the LSESU Buddhism Awareness Society on Facebook



Christianity

“The glory of God is a human being fully alive.”

St Irenaeus (2nd century)

Beliefs

Christians believe that God became fully present in the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. A Jew himself, he summarised the law as loving God and neighbour. But he extended the message of God’s redemption to all people and Christians believe that in dying on the Cross, he made himself a sacrifice to reconcile all humanity with its creator. They believe he rose from the dead and has sent the Spirit of God to renew and inspire people in the world today.

Consequently, Christians have a distinctive understanding of God as a trinity – Father (Creator), Son (Redeemer), and Holy Spirit (Sustainer) – while still emphasising the unity of God. Their scriptures consist of four different accounts of the life of Jesus (gospels), an account of life among the earliest disciples, a prophecy about the future, and a number of letters to early Christian communities. Many of these letters were written by St Paul, a former opponent of Jesus’ early followers who had a powerful conversion experience and went on to expound much of Christian thought and practice. These different books comprise the New Testament which Christians add to the Hebrew scriptures of the Jewish faith.

Customs and practices

Somebody becomes a Christian through Baptism (immersion in water) which symbolises a sharing in the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is an initiation into the life of the Church which Christians believe to be the body of Christ in the world today. Christians pray, worship and read the Bible together. They also follow Jesus’ instruction of taking bread and wine, and declaring it his body and

blood offered in sacrifice for all. Jesus was poor and homeless, and was criticised for associating himself with others who were socially outcast. So Christians believe that as well as teaching others about Jesus they should work for peace and social justice.

The principal Christian festivals are Christmas (celebrated on 25 December by most Christians), when the birth of Jesus is remembered, and Easter (which varies according to the lunar calendar) when Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is celebrated.

Practical information

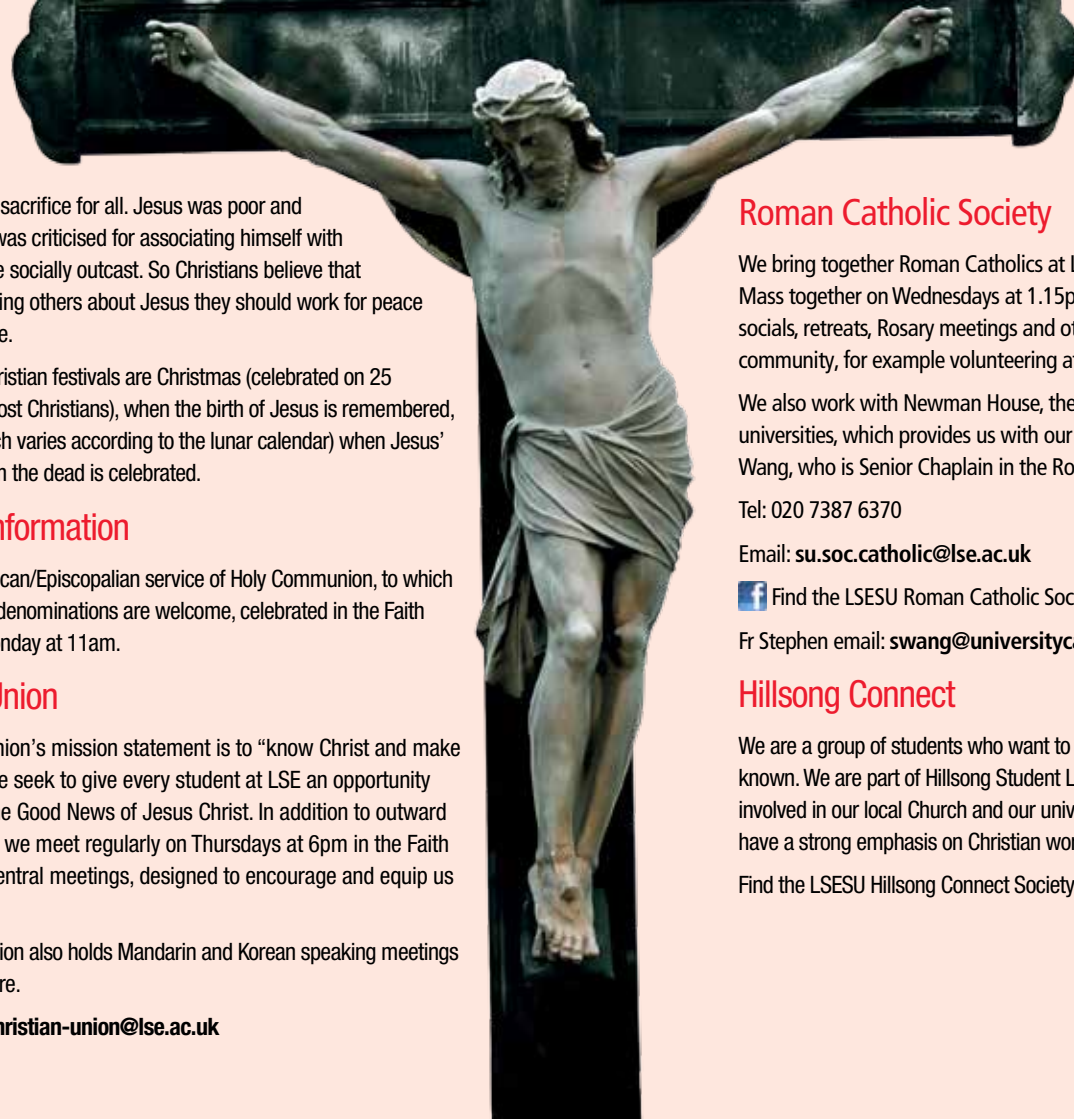
There is an Anglican/Episcopalian service of Holy Communion, to which Christians of all denominations are welcome, celebrated in the Faith Centre every Monday at 11am.

Christian Union

The Christian Union’s mission statement is to “know Christ and make Him known”. We seek to give every student at LSE an opportunity to hear about the Good News of Jesus Christ. In addition to outward focused events, we meet regularly on Thursdays at 6pm in the Faith Centre for CU central meetings, designed to encourage and equip us for evangelism.

The Christian Union also holds Mandarin and Korean speaking meetings in the Faith Centre.

Email: su.soc.christian-union@lse.ac.uk




Roman Catholic Society

We bring together Roman Catholics at LSE to share our faith and celebrate Mass together on Wednesdays at 1.15pm in the Faith Centre. We also hold socials, retreats, Rosary meetings and other events, and work in the local community, for example volunteering at St Patrick’s soup kitchen in Soho.

We also work with Newman House, the Catholic Chaplaincy to London universities, which provides us with our Catholic Chaplain at LSE, Fr Stephen Wang, who is Senior Chaplain in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster.

Tel: 020 7387 6370

Email: su.soc.catholic@lse.ac.uk

 Find the LSESU Roman Catholic Society on Facebook

Fr Stephen email: swang@universitycatholic.net

Hillsong Connect

We are a group of students who want to know Jesus better and make Him known. We are part of Hillsong Student Life and want to see our members getting involved in our local Church and our university communities. We meet weekly and have a strong emphasis on Christian worship music.

Find the LSESU Hillsong Connect Society on Facebook.

The Anchorage

The Anchorage is a church for students interested in exploring the Christian faith in community, through study and worship and in acts of service. It is run by the Church of England and meets at 5pm in the Faith Centre on Sundays in term. The Anchorage is linked to the Student Christian Movement which has a long history at the LSE. For more information visit theanchorage.london.org or find us on Facebook.

Rejoice Pentecostal Prayer

LSE Rejoice is a Christian staff network established in October 2014. Rejoice is open to all.

We meet at the LSE Campus every Friday at 12 noon for an hour of praise, worship and discussions based on the teachings and understanding of the life of Christ.

LSE Rejoice can be contacted via email at rejoice@lse.ac.uk

Hinduism

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

Mahatma Gandhi

Beliefs

The term “Hinduism” was coined as recently as the 19th century to cover a wide range of ancient creeds, textual traditions and religious groups. Thus Hinduism has no single founder, doctrine or religious authority. Hinduism is best understood as a complete way of life, a path of sanctification and discipline that leads to a higher level of consciousness. This path is known as Dharma, the ancient law.

Hindus are often thought to be polytheists but most claim to believe in one supreme god who is incarnated in many forms. Hindus revere a body of texts as sacred scriptures known as the Vedas. Veda is a Sanskrit word meaning knowledge and many of these scriptures are concerned with Dharma. Other important texts include the great epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. The Bhagavad Gita (part of the Mahabharata) is very popular in the West.

Hindus believe that existence is a cycle of birth, death and rebirth, governed by Karma, a concept whereby beneficial effects are derived from past beneficial actions. Hindus believe that the soul passes through a cycle of successive lives and its next incarnation is always dependent on how the previous life was lived.


Customs and practices

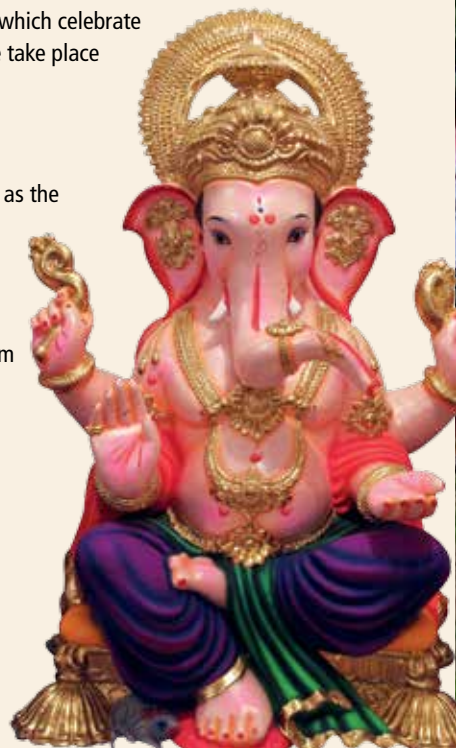
Hindus follow the lunar calendar and particular days are set aside during the week and month to honour particular manifestations of God. The main festivals are celebrated in different ways by different communities. The most commonly celebrated festivals are Diwali, the Festival of Lights, and Navrathi, nine nights which celebrate the triumph of good over evil. These take place twice a year.

Practical information

The LSE Hindu Society is recognised as the first such society in this country and has close links with the National Hindu Students Forum. It can provide members with all the information they need and give them an opportunity to celebrate various festivals at university.

Email: su.soc.hindu@lse.ac.uk

 Find the LSE Hindu Society on Facebook



Islam

“Let yourself be drawn by the stronger pull of that which you truly love.”

Jalal ad-Din Rumi (13th century Sufi poet)

Beliefs

Islam is an Arabic word which means willing submission to God. The root of the word Islam comes from a word meaning peace and Muslims believe it is the way of peace as laid down in the Quran. The Arabic word Allah means One God, and at the heart of the Muslim faith is belief in the unity and universality of God. Muslims also believe in the unity of mankind, under one father, Adam, and have a strong sense of the Muslim community or Ummah and an awareness of their solidarity with all Muslims worldwide. Muslims believe that God has sent a succession of prophets such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses and Jesus, and see Mohammed as the last and final prophet. Mohammed was born in Mecca in 570 CE and received revelations from God through the Angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years. These were recorded in Islam's Holy Book known as the Quran, which is regarded as the literal word of God. Muslims are taught to recite the Quran in Arabic as any translation of the Holy Book is seen as inadequate. Around one fifth of the world's population practises Islam.

Customs and practices

Islam has five pillars that represent the foundation of Islamic worship and practice:

- **Shahadah:** “There is no God but the one true God and Mohammed is his messenger”. Reciting this with intention three times makes someone a Muslim.
- **Salat:** Prayer five times a day at given times.
- **Zakat:** Two and a half percent of a Muslim's assets over a given specified amount is given in welfare tax to benefit the poor.
- **Hajj:** An annual pilgrimage to Mecca which is a requirement at least once in a lifetime for those who can afford it.
- **Sawm:** During the month of Ramadan (the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar), Muslims are required to abstain from food, drink and sexual acts from dawn until sunset.

The end of Ramadan marks the beginning of the festival of Eid ul-Fitr when Muslims visit the Mosque, give charity, exchange presents and cards, and celebrate with family and friends. Eid ul-Adha coincides with the completion of the Hajj and unites the whole Islamic community.

Practical information


Prayer facilities for LSE staff and students are located in the Faith Centre. Jumma prayers are at 1.15pm on Fridays in the Venue (basement of Saw Swee Hock Student Centre).

Mosques near LSE Halls of Residence

- **Bankside:** Bait-ul-Aziz Islamic Cultural Centre, 1 Dickens Square (off Harper Road), London SE1 4JL
- **Rosebery Avenue:** Holborn Muslim Community Association, 33 Brookes Court, Baldwin Gardens, London EC1N 7RR
- **Passfield:** Islamic Cultural and Education Centre, 68 Churchway, Somers Town, London NW1 1LT
- **High Holborn:** LSE Prayer Room
- **Carr-Saunders:** Muslim World League, 46 Goodge Street, London W1T 4LX

Islamic Society

Email: su.soc.islamic@lse.ac.uk

 Find the LSE Islamic Society on Facebook



Judaism

“The pure righteous do not complain of the dark, but increase the light; they do not complain of evil, but increase justice; they do not complain of ignorance, but increase wisdom.”

Rav Kook (20th century Rabbi)

Beliefs

The Jewish people believe themselves to be descended from a Semitic tribe that originated in the land of Canaan in the Middle East. Their early history is told in the Hebrew scriptures which recount how God promised to Abraham, a trader and leader of a nomadic tribe, that his descendants would be the father of a great nation. Abraham's grandson Jacob had 12 sons who became ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. They were enslaved in Egypt and the book of Exodus tells how they were liberated under the leadership of Moses. For many years they wandered in the wilderness, during which time God revealed to Moses the Torah, or Law, which constitutes the Jewish way of life. After Moses' death the tribes eventually conquered the Promised Land with the help of God.

Study and interpretation of the Torah is an integral part of Jewish life. It covers family relationships, social interaction and good commercial practice, as well as setting out the religious rituals that are still celebrated today. In the modern world the vast majority of Jews are less than fully observant and there is a broad spectrum within the Jewish community from orthodox, to reform, to entirely secular.

Customs and practices

The Jewish Sabbath begins on Friday evening at sunset and is an important time when families gather for the Shabbat meal. Orthodox Jews will not drive or carry out domestic chores during the Sabbath.

There are five festivals on which observant Jews are forbidden to work. The New Year (Rosh Hashanah) falls in the autumn and is followed ten days later by the most solemn day of the year, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). The other major festivals are known as the three pilgrim festivals: Passover (Pesach) in the spring, Pentecost (Shavuot) which occurs seven weeks later and Tabernacles (Sukkot) which takes place in the autumn.

Jewish food laws are highly complicated, prohibiting certain animals and shellfish. Acceptable animals must be slaughtered in such a way as renders them kosher.



Practical information

Kosher lunches are available on the 4th floor of the Old Building, and kosher sandwiches in the nearby Sainsbury's, at the coffee cart outside Tower 1 and in the cafe in Clare Market Building.


Most of the community life happens in North West London, in Golders Green and Hendon. There is a Chabad centre at Marble Arch.

Jewish Society

The Jewish Society at LSE is non-denominational and cross-communal so welcomes students of all affiliations. The society is also part of the London J-Socs which means that many events are run together with other Jewish societies throughout London.

Rabbi Gavin Broder, the Jewish chaplain to London universities, is available for one-to-one chats and welfare support and works with the Jewish Society and the UJS helping to support and run student events.

Email: su.soc.jewish@lse.ac.uk

 Find the LSE Jewish Society on Facebook

Rabbi Broder email: rabbibroder@mychaplaincy.co.uk

Rabbi Broder tel: 020 7388 1976



Sikhism

“Without contentment, we are never fulfilled. Like vapid dreams, our goals and efforts are in vain.”

Guru Nanak

Beliefs

The Sikh faith was revealed through the teachings of the ten Gurus, the first of whom was Guru Nanak Dev Ji, born in 1469 CE in the Punjab. In 1708 the 10th and the last Guru in human form, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, vested spiritual authority in the Holy Sikh scriptures known as the Guru Granth Sahib Ji and temporal authority in the community of initiated Sikhs, the Khalsa Panth.

Sikhs strictly believe that there is one God. While being absolute and beyond human comprehension, God can be realised and experienced through contemplation and service. The object of a Sikh's life is to develop God consciousness and ultimately to receive God's grace.

A Sikh's way of life is guided by the principles of remembering God at all times (Naam Simran), earning a living by honest means (Kirat Karna), and sharing with the poor and needy (Wand Shakna). Sikhs try to avoid the five vices that make people self-centred and build barriers against God in their lives: lust, covetousness, attachment to things of this world, anger and pride.

Customs and practices

The 10th Guru, Gobind Singh Ji, reaffirmed the abolishment of distinctions of caste, colour, race and religion. He made it obligatory for initiated Sikhs to share Amrit (holy water), to adopt the same religious name of Singh (lion) for men and Kaur (princess) for women, and to wear five articles of faith, commonly known as the five Ks: Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha (a small wooden comb), Kara (an iron/steel bangle), Kirpan (a short sword for defence) and Kachhera (special shorts). Although not mentioned in the five articles of faith, the Daastar (turban) is an essential accompaniment, which is worn to maintain the sanctity of Kesh and is treated with utmost respect. The Guru instructed Sikhs to abstain from tobacco, drugs and intoxicants. The Guru also instructed Sikhs to contribute a minimum one 10th of their wealth, mind and body for charitable causes.



Practical information

Prayer rooms change so contact the LSE Sikh-Punjab Society for more information. There is a great deal of collaboration amongst the London University Sikh societies.

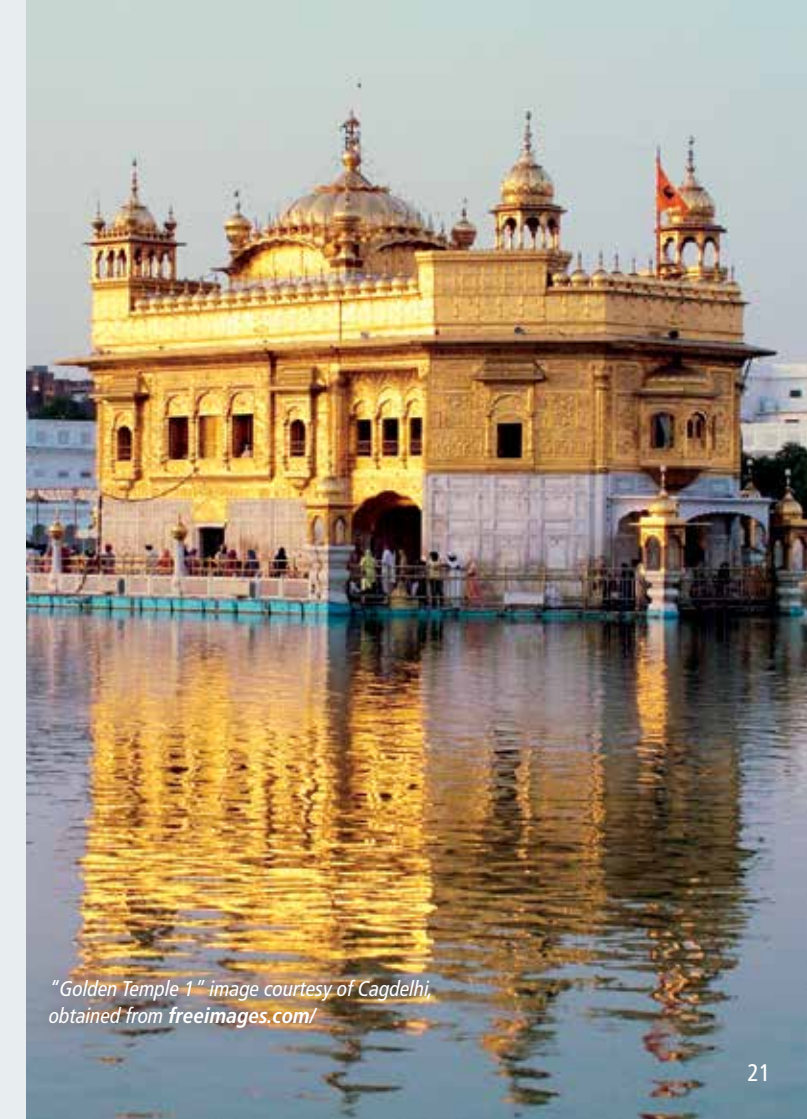
A designated vegetarian microwave is available in the Faith Centre.

Nearest Gurdwara: Central Gurdwara (Khalsa Jatha), 58-62 Queensdale Road, Shepherds Bush, London W11 4SG

Please note that non-vegetarian items served in the university restaurants may be halal or kosher.

Email: su.soc.punjab@lse.ac.uk

 Find the LSE Sikh-Punjab Society on Facebook



“Golden Temple 1” image courtesy of Cagdelhi, obtained from [freemages.com/](https://www.freemages.com/)

Atheism and humanism

“My country is the world, and my religion is to do good.”

Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, 1791

Beliefs

Atheism is the absence of belief in supernatural beings. Atheists believe in freedom of and from religion. As atheists usually trust the scientific method for explanations of nature and being, they hold that the burden of proof falls on theists. Agnostics and sceptics are similar in their general doubt about the existence of supernatural beings.

Most atheists and many theists are secularists, holding that beliefs ought to be private and should not be imposed on anyone, certainly not through public institutions.

Humanism is a set of moral and ethical standpoints that constitute a belief in the advancement of humanity through its own efforts. Humanists endorse ideals that promote the peaceful co-habitation of all beings on earth, such as fairness, compassion, tolerance and reason.

Customs and practices

Atheists, secularists and humanists (ASHs) think that an ethical way of life comes from within all of us and extends to all people, irrespective of their chosen lifestyles or personal decisions. Therefore, customs and practices of ASHs are determined on a personal basis, with the foundations of reason and compassion at the centre. Thus, there are no practices that make someone more or less of an ASH.

Nevertheless, ASHs think that human beings can act to give their own lives meaning by seeking happiness in this life and helping others to do the same. For this purpose, many ASHs meet regularly to talk, learn and share ideas, to discuss and campaign on social and moral issues, and to socialise and celebrate life and significant events. For instance, registered Humanist Celebrants conduct ceremonies to observe life rites (eg, birth, coming of age, marriage, death).


Practical information

Many LSE students come from places where criticism and scepticism towards religion is heavily constrained. The LSESU Atheist, Secularist and Humanist Society (LSESU ASH) has members from both religious and non-religious backgrounds and aims to create an environment on campus where everyone, whether religious or non-religious, can be comfortable in discovering their own, independent stance towards questions of belief and religion.

For that purpose, the LSESU ASH Society regularly holds talks, debates and socials. As an open discussion of issues of beliefs is especially important to ASHs, freedom of conscience and expression are core values that the LSESU ASH Society actively promotes on campus.

Email: su.soc.humanist@lse.ac.uk

 Find the LSESU ASH Society on Facebook

 Twitter: @LSESUASH



Finding support

At LSE we take a positive view of the role religion can play in individual and community life. But religion can also have a damaging effect. In addition to the support and advice provided by the Chaplain, LSE has two organisations that may provide you with appropriate support if you're having concerns or difficulties in relation to a religious community.



The LSE Student Counselling Service sees students from all different backgrounds and recognises the importance and value of faith for many students. The service also recognises that some students may have difficulties as a result of conflicts between their upbringing and current lifestyle and beliefs. The service wishes to be open and understanding towards the types of problems that some students may have as a result of such conflicts. The service understands the particular importance for such students in being reassured about the absolute confidentiality of the counselling on offer in these circumstances.

Tel: 020 7852 3627 or ext 3627
 Email: student.counselling@lse.ac.uk
 Web: lse.ac.uk/counselling



Inform is an independent charity that aims to help people by providing information about minority religions and alternative, spiritual and esoteric movements that is as accurate, balanced and up-to-date as possible.

Inform aims to alleviate unnecessary anxiety about alternative religious movements, while raising awareness of issues that may be problematic. Inform was founded by Professor Eileen Barker in 1988 with the support of the British Home Office and the mainstream churches. It is based at LSE.




Inform maintains a database of over 4,000 different minority religions, new religious movements (NRMs) or "cults", and associated organisations.

Inform also responds to questions about new developments and movements within mainstream religious traditions. Inform receives hundreds of enquiries each year from government bodies, the media, members, former members and the relatives of members of different religious groups, chaplains, universities, students and the general public.

If you have a query concerning a religious movement, please contact us. Our dedicated information line operates from 10am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday or you can contact us by email. All enquiries are treated with the strictest confidentiality.

Tel: 020 7955 7654
 Email: inform@lse.ac.uk

Interfaith calendar 2016/17

	Buddhism 	Christianity 	Hinduism 
August – October 2016		Assumption/Dormition 15 August <i>Commemorates glorification of Jesus' mother</i>	Navaratri 1 October – 9 October <i>Symbolises triumph of good over evil</i> Dussera 11 October <i>Rama's victory over evil</i> Diwali 30 October <i>Festival of lights</i>
November 2016 – January 2017		Christmas Day 25 December (7 January Orthodox) <i>Birth of Jesus</i>	
February – April 2017	Parinirvana Day 15 February <i>Anniversary of Buddha's death</i>	Ash Wednesday 1 March <i>First day of Lent</i> Good Friday 4 April <i>Death of Jesus</i> Easter Sunday 6 April <i>Resurrection of Jesus</i> Easter (Orthodox) 16 April <i>Resurrection of Jesus</i>	Holi 13 March <i>Spring festival</i> Ram Navami 5 April <i>Birth of Lord Ram</i> Swaminarayan Jayanti 10 April <i>Birth of Lord Swaminarayan</i>

Interfaith calendar 2016/17

	Islam 	Judaism 	Sikhism 	Other notable dates
August – October 2015	Eid-ul-Adha 12 September <i>Festival of Sacrifice</i> Al-Hijra 2 October <i>Islamic New Year</i>	Rosh Hashanah 3 September <i>Jewish New Year</i> Yom Kippur 12 October <i>Day of Atonement</i> Sukkot 17-23 October <i>Feast of Tabernacles</i>	Birthday of Guru Nanak 14 November	
November 2015 – January 2016	Ashura 11 October <i>Day of fasting (esp Shia)</i>	Hanukkah 23 December – 1 January <i>Festival of Lights</i>	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh 5 January	Remembrance Day 11 November Interfaith Week 13-20 November
February – April 2016		Purim 12 March <i>Jewish people saved by courage of Esther</i> Pesach 11-18 April <i>Commemorates liberation from Egypt</i>	Hola Mohalla 13 March <i>Military exercises and mock battles</i>	Holocaust Memorial Day 27 January International Women's Day 8 March

Festivals in the Jewish Calendar begin on the sunset of the previous day.

Islamic festivals begin with the sighting of the moon.

If you are planning an event or timetabling a lecture/class at LSE and are concerned that a religious festival might impact on attendees, you are welcome to contact the Chaplain for advice (j.walters2@lse.ac.uk)

	Buddhism 	Christianity 	Hinduism 
May – July 2016	Wesak or Buddha Day 10 May <i>Celebration of the Buddha's birthday</i> Dharma Day 15 July <i>Buddha's first sermon</i>	Ascension 25 May <i>Jesus' ascension into heaven</i> Pentecost/Whitsun 4 June <i>Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church</i>	
August – October 2016		Assumption/Dormition 15 August <i>Commemorates glorification of Jesus' mother</i>	Navaratri 21 September – 29 September <i>Symbolises triumph of good over evil</i> DUSSERA 30 September <i>Rama's victory over evil</i> DIWALI 19 October <i>Festival of Lights</i>

Interfaith calendar 2016/17

	Islam 	Judaism 	Sikhism 	Other notable dates
May – July 2016	Ramadan Begins 27 May <i>Month of fasting</i> Eid-ul-Fitr 25 June <i>Celebrates end of Ramadan</i>	Shavuot 31 May – 1 June <i>Harvest Festival</i>	Guru Arjan 16 June <i>Martyrdom of fifth guru</i>	World Humanist Day 21 June
August – October 2016	Eid-ul-Adha 1 September <i>Festival of Sacrifice</i> Al-Hijra 22 September <i>Islamic New Year</i> Ashura 1 October <i>Day of fasting (esp Shia)</i>	Rosh Hashanah 14-15 September <i>Jewish New Year</i> Yom Kippur 30 September <i>Day of Atonement</i> Sukkot 5-11 October <i>Feast of Tabernacles</i>		

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Religious Observance Policy

Timetabling is always a tricky business! But we do our best not to disadvantage those who have religious obligations at particular times. This policy has been agreed to help ensure that.

The School must have due regard to the removal or minimising of disadvantage suffered by people with a relevant protected characteristic and foster good relations between people protected by the Equality Act. Although timetabling is done in a neutral fashion, it may potentially disadvantage certain students because of the obligations of their religion and belief. LSE is therefore required to redress this unless it can be justified as a proportionate means to achieving a legitimate aim eg, it is the only time slot without any clashes.

1 There are three categories of events which the policy addresses:

- timetabled teaching events;
- timetabled examinations;
- other events organised by the School or Department, eg, awards ceremonies, orientation or public events.

2 As far as practicable, teaching and assessment or School-wide events should not be scheduled at the following times:

- Friday lunchtimes – Muslim prayer time, 1-2pm.
- Friday afternoons after 3pm in Michaelmas and Lent terms – Jewish Sabbath.

3 Where events are scheduled at these times alternative methods of accessing the information should be provided eg, classes or seminars at alternative times, lecture capture, podcasts or notes and handouts. Lecture capture remains at the discretion of individual faculty members and is not affected by this policy.

4 Where examinations are scheduled during religious festivals students are encouraged to inform Registry so that alternative arrangements can be investigated and implemented where possible (ie, current practice should apply).

5 Those students who wish to observe the Jewish Sabbath but who have a long journey which means they may not get home before sunset may submit a request for an adjustment.



The information in this publication can be made available in other formats on request: please email faithcentre@lse.ac.uk

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