

CANDIFA: Interfaith Week 2025

Chanting from the Faiths

The Baha'i Faith:

The Prophet-Founder of the Baha'i faith, Baha u llah, described music as a 'ladder for the soul'. In the Baha'i faith, there are no rituals associated with chanting, however Baha'is put Baha'i writings and prayers, translated into more than 800 languages, to music using the influence of their cultures and talents. Baha'i gatherings are often filled with melodious singing and prayers, some chanted in the original Persian or Arabic language.

An example: *'Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone. Let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path'*

(Vincent, Hannah and members of the Baha'i community)

Buddhism:

(a) Nichiren Buddhism was founded by Nichiren in 13th century Japan; Soka Gakkai translates as 'the society for the creation of value', based on the teachings of Nichiren; this is the tradition of the group chanting key passages from the Lotus Sutra today. The Sutra is followed by the mantra 'Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, recited morning and evening, either alone or with others. The mantra translates as 'Devotion to the Mystic Law of the Lotus Flower Sutra', a mantra seeking to connect the individual to their inherent Buddha.

(Peter Norris and members of the SG community)

(b) The chanting is in the ancient language of Pali from the Theravada Buddhist tradition. A Buddhist can chant on his/her own as a daily routine or can follow the chanting of monks at a religious ceremony. The chants are in reverence to the Buddha and a reminder of the many principles he taught in his sermons.

(Gaya Perera)

Christianity: Taize Chanting

Taize is a village in Burgundy, France. It is home to an ecumenical community of around 100 Christian brothers from all over the world. Brother Roger, the first Prior, said there could be no peace in Europe until there was peace among the churches. The community welcomes young people and pilgrims, with no particular theological demands, to worship together with prayer, chanting and silence. The simple chants, in many different languages, are easy to remember and echo in the heart long after the prayer has finished.

(Rev. Lizzie Hopthrow)

Hinduism:

Many Hindus chant during daily prayers and rituals. The ***Gayatri Mantra***, the mother of all mantras, is chanted to bring wisdom and emotional balance, reducing stress and anxiety. It translates as: 'Oh, my Brilliant Goddess of Energy ...we meditate on you, drive our minds from the material world to the celestial world, to a higher level of existence'.

The ***Vakratunda Mahakaya Mantra*** is chanted daily to Lord Ganesha, the God of New Beginnings, to ask his wisdom and the removal of obstacles to any new venture. It translates as: 'Please let all my works be done without any obstacles'.

(Neha Rane and Yashaswinee Raj)

Islam:

The Azan: the Call to Prayer: Muslims pray 5 times a day, at home, at work or, especially on Friday, in the mosque. The Azan or Call to Prayer, given at home or in the mosque, calls all Muslims to come and pray. Its words include:

'God is the greatest ...

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah ...

Come fast to prayer ...'

(Salah Bouzekria)

Children from the Arabic school will sing a song welcoming Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) on his arrival to Mecca from Medina, a journey which would mark the beginning of the Islamic calendar, 1,447 years ago.

A short Quranic recitation about Mariam and the birth of Jesus.

(Huzaifa Mugal/Dr.Nazar Shingrai)

Judaism:

The Shofar: The shofar is a ram's horn, frequently mentioned in the Bible when blown for ceremonial purposes and to herald significant events such as the giving of the Torah (Jewish scripture) on Mt. Sinai and the fall of Jericho. Today it remains central to Jewish worship during Rosh Hashanah (the New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) when it is a call to spiritual reawakening. There are three main types of blasts: tekiah (one long blast), shevarim (three medium length blasts) and truah (nine short blasts). Blowing the shofar is a deeply symbolic act – it is a spiritual call to repentance and renewal.

(Dan Cohn-Sherbok)

Sikhism:

In Sikhism, chanting aloud can be done alone or in a group when it creates uplifting, collective energy. Sometimes chanting is done silently in the mind with only a mental repetition in rhythm with the breath, deepening meditation and inner stillness. Chants often include the words 'Satnam' (Truth is the Name) or 'Waheguru' (Wonderful Lord or Divine Teacher) expressing awe and gratitude towards God.

(Rani Babra)