

Major religions in South Africa

Let us check

- Do you follow a religion? What is it called?
- What other religions can you name?
- Do you know people from different religions?

New words

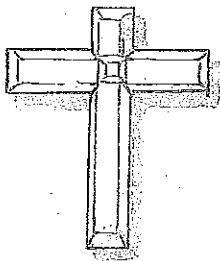
religion – a way of believing in God or gods

symbol – a mark, sign or picture that has a special meaning

People from different religions have different beliefs, traditions and ways of showing what they believe. The major religions in South Africa are Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Bahá'í Faith and African Traditional Religion.

Religious symbols

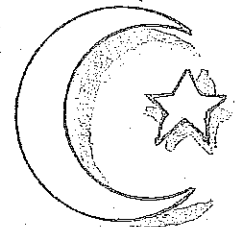
Many religions have a symbol. Each symbol has a meaning.



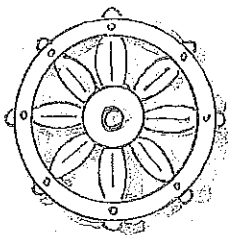
The Christian symbol is the cross. It is the sign of Jesus dying on the cross.



The Jewish symbol is the six-pointed star. The star symbolises the star of David.



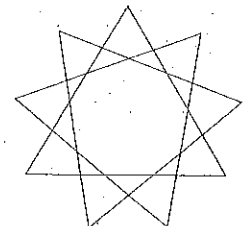
The Islam symbol is the crescent moon and star. In Islam the phases of the moon mark their calendar.



The Buddhist symbol is a wheel with eight spokes. The wheel symbolises the eight things that all Buddhists must do.



The Hindu symbol is the aum or 'om'. The aum symbolises the sound that Hindus chant at the beginning and end of prayers.



The most common symbol for the Bahá'í faith is the nine-pointed star. The number nine symbolises completeness.

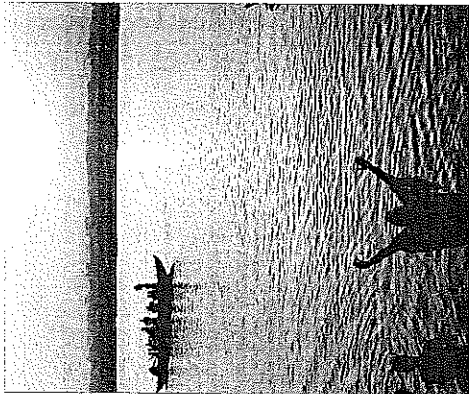
Read about significant places in different religions

Every religion has places that are important to them. Look at the photographs of significant places on these two pages. Read the information about each place and why it is important.

New words

significant – important, has a special meaning

sin – bad action



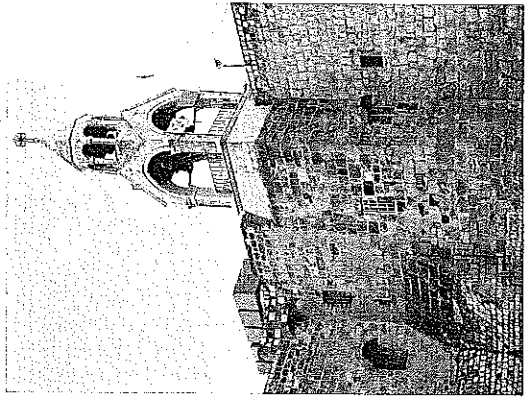
The Ganges river

The Ganges river

For Hindus the Ganges river in India is very significant. Hindus believe that a drop of water from the Ganges can wash away their sins. They bathe in the river. They also scatter the ashes of their dead in the water.

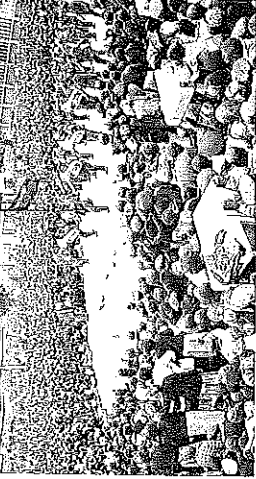
Bethlehem and the Church of the Nativity

Bethlehem is a town in Israel where Christians believe Jesus was born. It is a significant place in the Christian religion. The Christian scriptures tell us how Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, travelled to Bethlehem to take part in a census. The only place they could find to stay was a stable, and this was where Jesus was born. Today, the Church of the Nativity marks Jesus' birthplace.



The Church of the Nativity

Moria in Limpopo Province

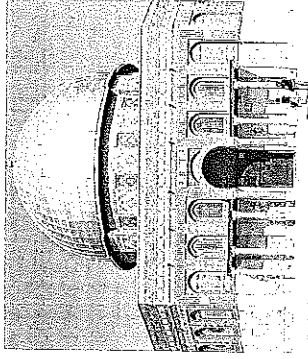


Worshippers at Moria in Limpopo Province

The Zionist Christian Church is the largest African church in South Africa. Their significant place is Moria in the Limpopo Province. Every Easter, more than a million Zionists go to Moria to celebrate.

Jerusalem in Israel

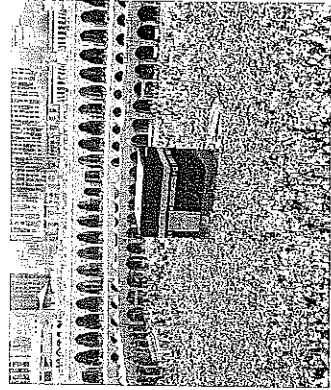
Jerusalem is a town in Israel that is sacred for Muslims, Christians and Jews. For Muslims, the Dome of the Rock is the place in Jerusalem from which the Prophet Muhammad made his miraculous Night Journey. For Jews, it was the ancient capital of the Promised Land. For Christians, it is where Jesus spent his last days on earth and was crucified.



The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem

The Ka'aba in Makkah

Muslims believe that their religion was completed by the Prophet Muhammad, who was born in Makkah in Arabia (now Saudi Arabia). All Muslims must try to make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah at least once in their lives. The Ka'aba is a



Muslims at the Ka'aba

cube-shaped building in the Grand Mosque in Makkah where people worship. Wherever they are in the world, Muslims turn to face the Ka'aba when they pray.

New words

crucified – killed by nailing to a cross

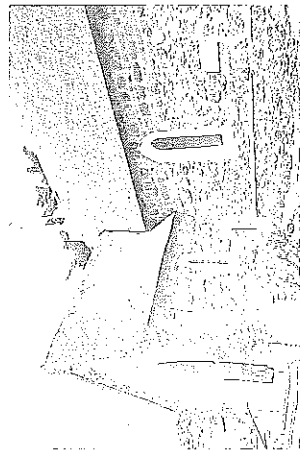
pilgrimage – religious or holy journey

Significant buildings in different religions

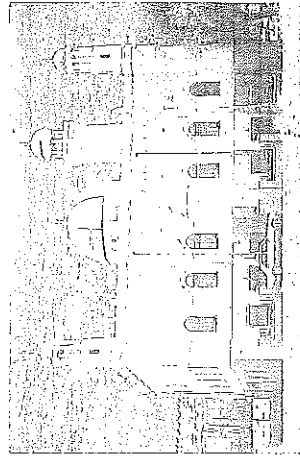
New word

Qur'an – the Islamic holy book

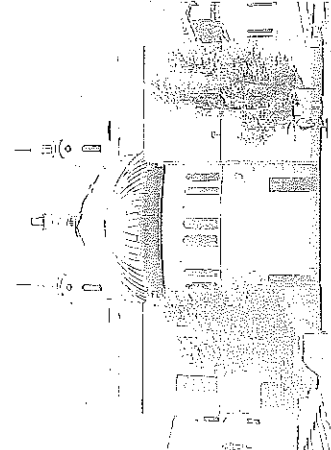
Most religions have special places where believers go to worship. Sometimes, these places are buildings specially for worshipping and meeting. Sometimes they are ordinary places usually used for other activities. Sometimes these places are outdoors, in nature.



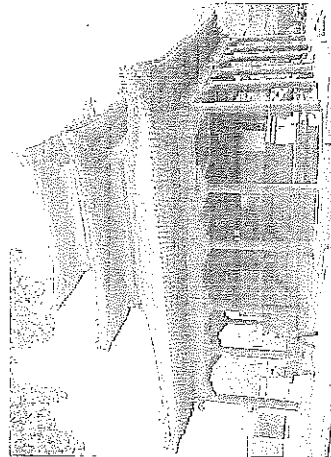
Christians worship in a church. Churches can be big or small, new or old, decorated or plain. Many churches are built in the shape of a cross.



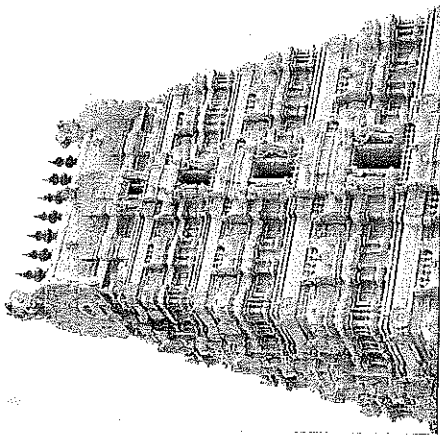
Muslims worship in a mosque. Many mosques have a dome-shaped roof. They are decorated with patterns and verses from the Qur'an.



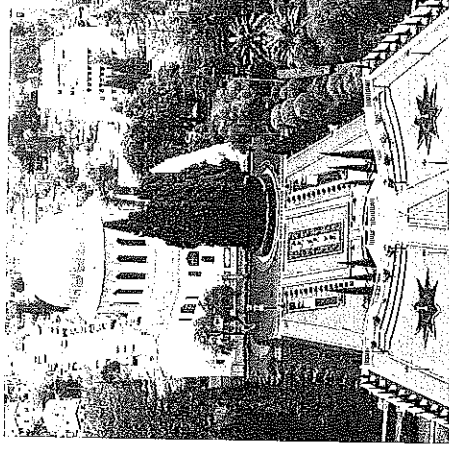
Jewish people worship in a synagogue. In some synagogues men and women sit apart and in others they sit together.



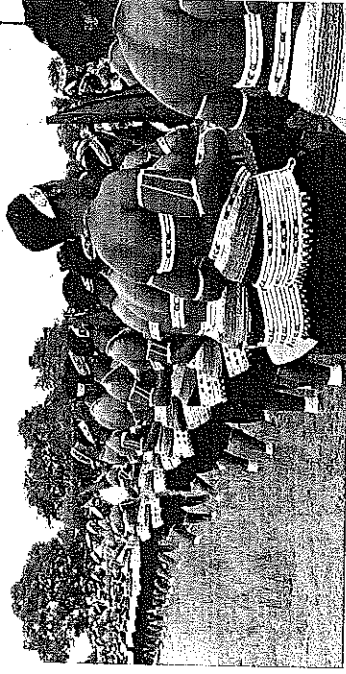
Buddhists worship in buildings called shrines. A shrine is a place where people come to worship a particular religious leader or saint. Buddhists have statues of Buddha in their shrines.



Many Hindus worship in a temple. Their temples are called *mandirs* and are the homes of gods or goddesses. People gather at the temple for festivals and celebrations.



Most Bahá'í meetings happen in people's homes, local Bahá'í centres or rented buildings. There are seven Bahá'í Houses of Worship in the world. These are special places that include a hospital, a university and other important institutions.



Most African Traditional Religion ceremonies happen outside in nature. ATR followers might have special trees, rivers, forests and mountains that are sacred and used as places of worship.

Activity

Identify religious buildings

Work on your own.

1 Name the building in which people from the following religions worship:

- 1.1 Jews
- 1.2 Hindus
- 1.3 Muslims
- 1.4 Christians
- 1.5 Buddhists

Copy and draw the symbol for each of these religions.

New words

institution – a large, important building and organisation that has a special purpose

sacred – something with a special religious meaning and importance