

# CARING across cultures



**Multicultural and  
Multifaith Considerations in  
Dying and Death**



*St. Mary's Hospital Center*  
**PASTORAL/SPIRITUAL CARE SERVICES**

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## Foreword

The information included in this presentation has been gathered from different sources and may or may not be applicable to your present situation. This is intended as a general, but by no means absolute, guideline bearing in mind the ever changing outlook of succeeding generations.

This volume is produced by Public Relations in collaboration with Pastoral/Spiritual Services and Social Services.

This booklet was produced in an attempt to lessen the stresses on staff during the process of a patient's dying and death. As stated previously, these are guidelines only but we hope that they help staff to be more comfortable in dealing with patients and families of different cultures and faiths.

The Pastoral/Spiritual Services department is available to staff for consultation and/or relevant information. There is someone on call at all times. During regular office hours they may be contacted by calling local 3361. After office hours please contact locating at 3232 and ask for the Chaplain on call. There is also a list of community bereavement resources available upon request from the Pastoral/Spiritual Services department.

We have endeavored to include cultures and faith reflective of our hospital population.

## Caring Considerations for the Dying

Situation	Approach
1. Staff is aware of specific customs and traditions patient and family may follow.	1. When appropriate, encourage the family to be open and honest with the patient in discussing illness and impending Death.
2. Family and patient will carry out rituals according to their beliefs during the dying period.	2a. Establish with patient and family any specific customs or rituals they would find comforting. b. Explore ways of facilitating the ability to practice the identified customs and rituals.
3. Patient and family express satisfaction with the care and consideration shown them by staff.	3a. Encourage patient to remain as functional as possible and as in control of the situation as is comfortable for the patient. If patient is the head of the family continue to let the patient make decisions. b. Assess need for an increased supportive care network: extended family, friends and other professionals; e.g. Pastoral/Spiritual services. c. Enhance the provision of emotional and spiritual support by participating in selected readings or prayers, if appropriate.

## Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning\*

In bereavement literature, professionals frequently refer to Worden's «Tasks of Mourning.» This provides an excellent framework to address the «grief work» patients and their families may be experiencing during the mourning process.

1. To accept the reality of the loss
2. To experience the pain of grief
3. To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing
4. To withdraw emotional energy and reinvest it in another relationship

\* «Grief Counseling & Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner» J. William Worden Springer Publishing. N.Y. 1982

Grieving and mourning have no time limits. There is no right or wrong way. Each individual grieves at his/her own pace and in their own manner. What is important is respect.

# Care Plan for the Bereaved

## Goal

To enable the survivor(s) to cope with the loss by moving through the process of grief and mourning.

## Approach

- a) Anticipate the beginning of the mourning process before death and provide privacy which may be needed for the expression of grief.
- b) Anticipate the possibility of a heightened expression of emotion at the time of death and into bereavement.
- c) Provide appropriate support.
- d) Be aware of mourning rituals.
- e) Facilitate bereavement follow-up if a need is expressed by the family. Such resources are available through Pastoral/Spiritual Services.

# Origins

## Blacks

Immigration of the Caribbean Blacks to Canada began in the 1950's with a dramatic increase in the 1960's and 1970's. The Black population is comprised of a great number of widely differing cultural groups. For example, a Black Muslim from Ethiopia has little in common with a Black Christian from Trinidad. Blacks from the Caribbean come from several different countries within that geographical area, like Jamaica or Guyana, among others, each with its own unique history and culture. Therefore, even the Caribbean Blacks cannot easily be discussed as a single group.

Among the Black peoples there are followers of each of the major religions. The majority of Caribbeans are of Christian background and there are some followers of the Rastafarian movement. Funeral and bereavement practices vary according to the specific religious tradition followed.

## Chinese

There were three major waves of Chinese immigration to Canada: in the early 1900's, male Chinese labourers came to work on the railroads; in 1947 a few students and relatives of those Chinese already in Canada immigrated; in the late 1960's and 1970's many young Chinese adults (mostly from Hong Kong) came as landed immigrants with their elderly parents

Within traditional Chinese society the family (based on an extended or clan structure) played a strong central role. The family was male-dominated and the primary relationship was father-son. While the Chinese continue to place a high value on the family, many factors (both in China and in Canada) have contributed to the erosion of that traditional extended family structure. For example, marriages are no longer «arranged» and the primary relationship has shifted to husband-wife. In addition, many wives are now in the work force. Longevity is also valued and the elderly are respected for both their age and wisdom. Traditionally the elderly were cared for by their children but this too is changing and more elderly Chinese are using the social services and institutions available.

Chinese society, in general, values education. It is seen as the key to economic and social success. Three medical systems co-exist within Chinese society:

1. Folk medicine.
2. Classical Chinese medicine based on the Taoist «Yin-Yang» principle
3. Western health care.

It has been found that two sensitive subjects which are rarely discussed, especially among elderly Chinese, are hospitalization and the need to make a will. Admission to hospital is often associated with death and to make a will may be considered a bad omen. Generally the subject of death may also be regarded as a taboo topic.

The religious affiliation of the Chinese community is diversified. The two largest groups are Buddhist and Christian (in its various forms). There are also a few Muslims.

## Greek

While Greek immigration to Canada began in the early 20th century, the major influx has occurred since the early 1960's with the majority of Greek immigrants being of working class background. The Greek community is now well-established and many more people, especially second generation Greek Canadians, are moving into the professions. That is, in part, due to the high value Greeks place on education which they feel is the key means for social and economic mobility.

Traditionally Greeks share a strong sense of family life. This structure encompasses an extended family unit which tends to be close and spend much time together. The traditional Greek family is male-dominated and follows clearly defined sex roles for both husband and wife. While these basic values remain, family life is changing as more and more women work outside the home.

The Greek Orthodox Church is an influential force within the Greek community. Death is usually viewed as a great tragedy. Generally, euthanasia is strongly opposed. Many Greeks feel that every effort should be made to preserve life until it is terminated by God. During the dying process and after death, feelings of grief may be openly expressed, especially by the women. A wailing and sobbing response is often exhibited to demonstrate the depth of their grief. Greek people usually discourage autopsies and prefer burial to cremation. The traditions followed immediately after the death include a wake and funeral service in the Church. After the graveside service when the grave is sealed, a memorial meal is held where it is believed the person who has died is spiritually present. The first forty days of bereavement are especially significant because it is believed that the spirit of the deceased remains on earth for forty days.

## South Asians

Among South Asians we see people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal as well as others. As with many other cultural groups, the traditional South Asian values and customs are slowly changing as they become more exposed to Canadian lifestyles. A South Asian's conduct and behaviour was traditionally governed by a strict set of religious values and beliefs. Parental authority was absolute and children's conduct was strictly governed by their parents, including the arranging of marriages. At present, the extended family system still remains central to all Asian cultures and has a very strong influence on behaviour and outlook. Each member considers himself or herself a part of the extended family group rather than as an independent individual. Where possible, important decisions are not made without consultation with the whole family. As a rule, the elderly are respected and their dependence accepted - rarely would the family consider not caring for them at home.

Traditionally, illness is considered to be the responsibility of the whole family. Thus the family usually expects to play a major part in supporting the sick person and may want to undertake much of the bedside care. It is common for South Asians to feel that the sick should stay in bed as long as possible with minimum activity (they may therefore become very distressed when encouraged to mobilize). There may be a great fear of catching a chill when ill (consequently they may wrap up well, decline cold drinks and be reluctant to bathe). Generally they expect a sick person to express anxiety and suffering openly - not to be cheerful or active.

Most South Asians follow one of the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist or Christian faiths. Religion tends to be considered a natural part of life and most cultural traditions have a religious significance by which people judge themselves and others.

## South East Asia

South East Asia is made up of peoples of Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia, Burma (Myanmar), Timor-Leste (East Timor), Malaysia, Brunei, Laos and Singapore. The three main religions in these countries are Muslim, Buddhism and Christianity.

## Italian

The first major Italian immigration occurred in the 1880's when thousands of Italians were recruited for railway labour. Beginning in the mid 1940's, a wealthier, better educated and business-oriented group began immigrating and there are a substantial number of second, third and even fourth generation Italians in Canadian communities.

It is impossible to describe Italians under a single ethnic label because the regions of Italy from which they come are so culturally diverse. While Italian communities are loosely structured and diversified, they are strong and well established and have developed a rich cultural, political, and social support network.

In general, Italians value both education and the work ethic. They also place a high value on the family and have a history of a strong authoritarian family unit. The vast majority of Italians follow the Catholic faith. While the church is thought to be losing some of its dominance as a cultural institution, religion continues to be very important to most Italian Canadians.

For many Italians, there may be a tendency not to tell the dying person about the seriousness of their illness, or to admit they are dying. This may be perceived as a way to protect the patient. The mourning process may begin before the actual death and may be marked by a heightened emotional response such as wailing. Immediate family members and close friends usually assume charge of the household. There is a two day visiting period before burial. Shortly after death, the women of the immediate family wear black; the men may wear a black armband. The parent of the deceased wears black from head to toe for up to two years. The spouse may wear black forever. There is a «lifting» process by which, at certain points in time, the mourning colour changes, e.g. from black to blue to brown. There may be a stigma attached to not following the traditional mourning rituals; however, the person's age and length of time in Canada affect this adherence to custom. Young children may be exempt from the usual rituals. Bereavement follow-up may be appropriate and welcome, especially by the senior citizen.

## Jewish

The Canadian Jewish community is made up of Jews with roots in many different countries and with many different cultural backgrounds. The first wave of Jewish immigration was in 1920 as East European Jews fled the pogroms in Russia, Romania and Poland. The next wave, before World War II, brought German, Austrian, Czech, Polish, Latvian and Hungarian Jews as Nazism was spreading across Europe. Since the 1950's, another group namely the Sephardic Jews from Egypt and North Africa, immigrated to Canada.

There is a well developed and extensive structure of social, religious and cultural organizations within the community and participation in these groups is high. The practice of three distinctly different types of Judaism also adds to the community's diversity. Consequently, there are organizations such as the Canadian Jewish Congress which attempts to bring the various components of the community together. The religious and cultural aspects of Judaism are so interconnected that it is impossible to distinguish one from the other - the cultural community is linked to the synagogue which is the heart of the religion. Most Jews, regardless of the religious commitment, share the following basic values:

- A belief in the family as the basic unit of society.
- A view of the practice of charity as a legally binding obligation.
- A commitment to education, learning and the work ethic.
- A belief in the importance of ceremony and tradition.

The loss of Jewish identity through assimilation is one of the community's greatest concerns as it struggles to be part of the indigenous society while at the same time maintaining its cultural identity.

## Polish

Immigration to Canada has been closely tied to the history of the nation of Poland. The first wave of immigrants arrived before World War I, with the majority settling in western and central Canada. After World War I another wave of immigration was prompted by the shortage of land available to divide between the children, as was the Polish custom. During and after World War II foreign occupation of Poland prevented numerous soldiers and other citizens from returning to their homeland. Many of these people came to Canada. Today, many continue to arrive in Canada in the hope of providing a better future for their children.

In 1966 the Polish people celebrated one thousand years of Christianity. Worship generally follows the Catholic tradition. Day-to-day life is closely tied to the Church, and practicing the Christian faith means a great deal. Social events revolve around the Church and, therefore, Feast Days such as Easter, Christmas, Ascension Day, etc. have great significance.

Belief and practices surrounding attitudes to death and dying are noted under the Christianity section (see pg. 9). Frequently Polish families participate in prayer for the dead at the funeral home. This service is conducted by the priest and is called *Rozaniec* (the last prayers).

## Portuguese

The Portuguese, in general, place a high value on hard work and the family unit. Their concept of family is one of reciprocal rights and obligations within an authoritarian structure. Relatives often live within a few blocks of one another (especially in downtown cores). Social activity tends to be centered in the home and mutual assistance among family members is common. Traditionally, gender roles within the family are highly segregated. The father plays the dominant role and is the bread winner. The mother's role centers on the family - homemaking duties and raising the children. As in other cultural groups, many of these traditional structures are changing as more Portuguese women enter the work force, and as their children become more exposed to the less structured and more permissive Canadian lifestyle. These factors, among others, result in a high degree of stress on immigrant Portuguese families, especially for the women who are expected to maintain their traditional roles in addition to their new ones.

Generally, the Portuguese are comfortable consulting a doctor and usually expect medication to be prescribed. Many will use folk healers in conjunction with traditional health care. There is a general belief that a good diet and plump appearance are synonymous with good health.

The predominant religion of the Portuguese is Catholicism and the Church is often the focal point for family and social life. The role of the Church within the community appears to be less influential here than it is in Portugal. The Portuguese share many of the same rituals and concerns as the Italians regarding death and dying (See Italian, pg. 6).

## Ukrainian

There were two major waves of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. The first occurred between 1900 -1918 when many settled in the Prairies. The second wave occurred shortly after World War II with the new immigrants settling in communities across Canada including Edmonton, Winnipeg, Montreal and Toronto.

The Ukrainians work hard to purchase their own homes in order to provide a sense of security. This is important to them because of the hardships and uncertainty of their lives prior to immigration.

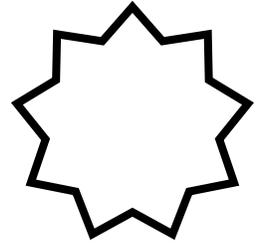
Close to the hearts of Ukrainians are the many expressions of their native culture. Traditional dancing in skillfully embroidered costumes, Easter egg painting, as well as preparing unique and delicious foods remain an integral part of their lives in Canada.

Ukrainians belong to the Catholic Church, as expressed in the Byzantine tradition, or may be members of the Orthodox faith. The significance Ukrainians attach to their faith in everyday life is reflected by the fact that their neighbourhoods invariably surround a church.

Beliefs and practices surrounding attitudes to death and dying are noted under the Christianity section. Ukrainian families participate in prayers for the dead at the funeral home. This service is conducted by the priest and is called *Panakhya*.

# Faiths

## Baha'i Faith



### Basic Beliefs

- The oneness of God, the oneness of religion, and the oneness of humanity.
- The purpose of religion is to unify humanity.
- All great religions and prophets are divine in origin.
- All great religions represent successive stages of divine revelation throughout human history.
- The eradication of racial and religious prejudice.
- The search for truth as an individual responsibility.
- The harmony of religion and science as complementary aspects of the truth.
- The establishment of an international auxiliary language.
- Basic education for all children.
- Abolition of extreme wealth and poverty.
- Equality of the sexes.

### Beliefs and Practices Regarding Death

**Beliefs:** An individual's essence or reality is spiritual, not physical; the body is seen as the throne of the soul, worthy to be treated with honour and respect even though it may be dead. After physical death, the soul continues to progress; it proceeds on to the next stage of existence, closer to God, free of physical limitations.

**Practices:** The body should be buried, not cremated; preferably without embalming (unless embalming is required by law). It must not be transported more than one hour's journey from the place of death. For a Baha'i over 15 years old, the Prayer for the Dead is to be recited at burial.

### Special Religious Rituals which can only be performed by an authorized representative of this faith

In cases of marriage, death and funerals, the chaplain is expected to contact the nearest Spiritual Assembly or the National Baha'i Centre. In Montreal the phone number is 514-849-0753.

## Buddhism

It is estimated that there are approximately 180,000 Buddhists in Canada. Founded in India in the 6th Century B.C. by Siddhartha Guatama (The Buddha), Buddhism seeks «the truth» through a middle way between the two extremes of asceticism and self indulgence. Essentially a monastic religion, it teaches that right living will enable people to attain Nirvana, the condition of the soul that does not have to live as a body and is free from all desire and pain. The underlying principle of all Buddhism is belief in reincarnation of the soul. There is great emphasis on meditation to relax the mind and body in order to see life in its true perspective.



There is a firm belief in non-violence; women are considered inferior (a woman must await rebirth as a male before she can attain Nirvana); there is a strong emphasis on individual effort - "Look within, Thou art the Buddha".

It is important for a patient to be allowed quietness and privacy for meditation. Great importance is also attributed to the state of the mind at death which should be calm, hopeful and as clear as possible. To this end some patients may be reluctant to take drugs, which must be respected. There are no special rituals regarding the body and cremation is common. However, when the individual is pronounced «dead» the body should be gently covered with a cotton sheet, with care taken not to create any disturbance to it. It must not be touched, manipulated or moved around by another person's hand or body. Do not close the eyes, mouth etc.. Leave the body just as it is.

# Christianity

Christianity is a religion dating back over two thousand years. There are approximately one billion Christians spread over all continents and comprising dozens of cultures and languages. This makes Christianity the largest religious group in the world as well as the prevailing religion in the Western Hemisphere.



Christianity was founded upon the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who is believed to be the Son of God. This faith must be taught, proclaimed and passed on to later generations - this is the responsibility of all Christians. Christianity proclaims that God created the world and that everything that exists depends on God. A belief in an after life and the soul are both integral parts of the Christian Faith. Sundays are observed as the holy day. Their holy writings include the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Today there are three major divisions of Christianity:

1. The **Catholic Church consists of Roman Catholics and Eastern Catholics:** The head of the church is the Pope, who is seen as infallible. Catholics are obliged to participate in a Holy Mass each Sunday and on designated Holy Days (e.g. Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Easter). They can also attend Mass on any week day. Their source of spiritual guidance is the parish priest. During illness, one is encouraged to receive the Sacraments of the Sick. These Sacraments include Confession, receiving the Holy Eucharist and the anointing with Holy Oils. This Rite is symbolical of a new life with God and can be received as often as necessary.
2. The **Protestant denominations:** The Protestant Church is comprised of many denominations including Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United, Baptist, etc. Protestant denominations are not under the jurisdiction of the Pope and each has its own regulating body. Participation in Sunday worship is encouraged but not obligatory.
3. The **Eastern Orthodox churches:** These are comprised primarily of the Greek, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian cultures. A magnificence of ancient tradition and ritual is incorporated into their formal church worship. The setting is often a Byzantine designed church, highlighted with icons and mosaics.

Upon death there are no specific rituals required but respect is expected at all times. After death the bereavement rituals may include:

- visitation to the bereaved at home or in a funeral home over a two to three day period, prior to the funeral
- funeral or memorial service in church or funeral home chapel to celebrate the life of the deceased and the departure of the soul to an afterlife.
- burial or cremation usually occurs after the funeral service. These rituals provide the bereaved with an opportunity to express their grief and to prepare for the «grief work» ahead.

# Hinduism

Hinduism evolved in India around 1400 B.C. and is defined as a wide variety of beliefs held together by an attitude of mutual tolerance, and by the characteristically Hindu conviction that all approaches to God are equally valid. The individual Hindu is, in effect, free to believe or disbelieve what he wants. He regards his religion as a total way of life.



The goal of every Hindu is to break free of this imperfect world and achieve reunion with Brahman. Brahman is literally everything physical, spiritual and conceptual - hence the belief in reincarnation and in the transmigration of souls until the soul is reunited with Brahman. The cycle then ceases.

Vegetarian diet is preferred; the killing of any living thing is outlawed and cows are considered sacred. As followers of the caste system, they believe one's membership in one of the four main castes is determined by birth.

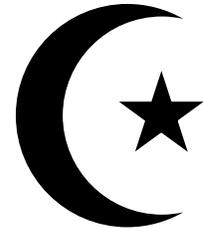
Hindu women wear a nuptial thread around the neck and sometimes a red mark on the forehead - these should not be removed. A male may have a sacred thread around the arm indicating attainment of adult religious status - it will cause great distress if this is removed. In the case of a dying patient the Hindu Priest will tie a thread around

the neck or wrist to indicate that a blessing has been given - again, this should not be removed. Readings from the Bhagavad Gita give great comfort to the dying person. It is important to the Hindu that his last word or thought be of his God. This will ensure his rebirth in a higher form. A Hindu would usually prefer to die at home and may wish to be on the floor near to Mother Earth. The eldest son is responsible for the funeral arrangements, so it is very important to a Hindu to have a surviving son to perform these rites. If no appropriate family member of the deceased (e.g. spouse, children) is available to wash the body nursing staff may do so. Cremation is usual and the ashes are traditionally scattered on water. The Ganges is the Hindu's holy river and some devout people may wish the ashes to be sent home to be scattered on the Ganges.

There is a set pattern of mourning with relatives and friends visiting regularly to comfort the family and to offer gifts of money, food and clothes. A final service, called the Kriya, is held approximately two weeks after death.

## Islam

Islam is a complete way of life and followers of Islam are called Muslims. They believe all people are created by God, (Allah), live by His grace, die by His will, and by His command they shall return to Him. Islam teaches that death is part of life and a rebirth into another world.



Pork and intoxicating substances are forbidden by Islamic law. Friday is the Holy Day for congregational prayer. A cleansing ritual is performed prior to prayer and one's head must face towards Mecca. Their holy book is the Koran.

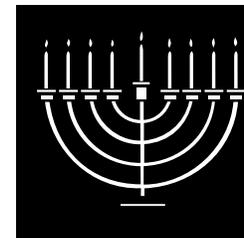
When symptoms of death appear the patient should be turned on his/her side and his/her head slightly raised. If possible, they should face east, the direction of the Quiblah, the Central Mosque in Mecca. The person attending the dying should continue reciting appropriate verses from the Koran. This is done gently so that the dying person is not disturbed. If the patient is rational and able to speak, they are encouraged to repeat the verses as their last words.

After death, the body should be washed and prepared by a trusted relative of the same sex, or the spouse. After death, the individual's eyes should be gently shut, his or her mouth closed with a bandage running under the chin and tied over the head, and arms and legs straightened. Burial takes place as soon as possible. No coffin is used and the grave is simple without dome or raised structure. Mourning is limited to three days except in the death of a spouse, when four months and ten days are required.

## Judaism

Judaism is one of the world's oldest major religions and the first to teach a belief in one God. It is a practical religion and is strongly focused on the family. Jews believe in a God who has a special Covenantal relationship with all the Jewish people so that if they obey God's laws, they may achieve salvation. They believe they are chosen by God to be examples to the world - a position of great responsibility, not of special favour. They also believe a «Messiah» or saviour will come to bring this world to perfection. Their holy writings include:

- The **TORAH (the law)** - the first five books of the Bible.
- The **TALMUD (commentary on the law)** - a collection of all Jewish laws and teachings taken from scriptures and oral tradition.



The Sabbath (holy day of rest) begins at sundown Friday and ends at sundown Saturday. The Synagogue (or temple) is their house of worship and also the center of Jewish education and community activities. The Rabbi serves as spiritual leader, teacher and interpreter of Jewish law. Worship is conducted both at home and in the Synagogue and there are many special holy days and festivals throughout the year.

There are three major divisions of Judaism:

1. **Orthodox Judaism** - places Jewish traditions above the values and mores of the general society; incorporates only those aspects of the general culture compatible with Jewish law.
2. **Conservative Judaism** - aims to synthesize the values of the general society and Jewish law and tradition; the past is always the starting point but the present must be taken in to account.

3. **Reform Judaism** - places general values above Jewish tradition; thus, the individual Jew decides what will be observed and what is meaningful to him or her.

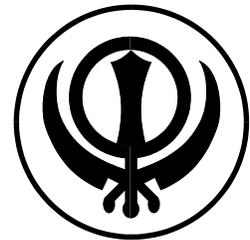
The traditions and practices that have evolved around death, dying and bereavement vary greatly depending on the person's adherence to Orthodox, Conservative or Reform Judaic beliefs. However, all practices attempt to accomplish three tasks:

1. To honour the dignity of the human body. Therefore no act or deed may be performed that might desecrate, mutilate or in any way dishonour the body - before or after death.
2. To assist the bereaved through their grieving process using the comprehensive laws of the whole mourning ritual.
3. To affirm the basic belief that life and death are part of God's plan.

According to Jewish law the body must not be left unattended from the time of death until burial. The body should be lying flat, completely covered, with eyes and mouth closed. Some families will insist on staying with the deceased until the body is picked up by the funeral chapel. A light should be on at the head of the bed. Jewish burial should take place «without undue delay» i.e. within twenty-four to forty-eight hours. Therefore pre-planning of the funeral is helpful. The family of the deceased sits SHIVA for seven days. During this time friends and relatives visit the bereaved and bring gifts of food. The family remains socially withdrawn for thirty days and the official mourning period is over after one year for parents, 30 days for other relatives. There are four specific services of remembrance for the deceased during each year and an additional observance upon the anniversary of the death. There is also a special service at the time of the unveiling of the tombstone (thirty days to one year after death).

## Sikhism

Sikhism, founded by Nanak in the 15th century A.D., was a combination of the Islamic belief in one God with the basic ethical beliefs and world view of Hinduism. Over the years, Sikhism developed its own doctrine and rituals based on the «**Granth**» - **the Holy Scriptures of Sikhism**. This is made up primarily of Hindu and Islamic writings and the thoughts of special Sikh holy men. Sikhs believe in a common God for all mankind and preach religious tolerance. They continue to be strongly influenced by Hinduism.



There are five traditional symbolic marks which all practicing Sikhs should wear;

1. Kesh - long, uncut hair and unshaven beards.
2. Kanga - A comb to keep the hair in place and symbolize discipline.
3. Kara - A steel bangle worn on the right wrist to symbolize strength and unity.
4. Kirpan - A sword, the symbol of authority and justice, often worn as a brooch.
5. Kachha - A pair of shorts initially to allow freedom of movement in battle, now a symbol of spiritual freedom.

It would cause distress for any of these symbols to be removed from the dying person. The Sikhs favour cremation for disposal of the dead with the ashes being thrown on water. There is no objection to medical staff handling the body. For a period of ten days following death, relatives and friends take part in a series of services, either in the home of the deceased or in the temple. A final service marks the end of the official mourning period.

# Pastoral & Spiritual Care Services

(514) 345-3511 .....extension 3361 (8:00 am - 16:00 pm)

.....extension 3232 (after 16:00 pm)

