

Holy Books and Ceremonial Objects:

Books:

Christian Bible

The Christian Bible includes both the Old Testament, derived from the Jewish Torah, and the New Testament. The order of the New Testament differs among Christian traditions. In this space, we currently have a New Revised Standard Version of the Bible for your use.

Tanakh

The **Tanakh**, a collection of Jewish holy texts, as well as an individually published **Torah**, is available for your use. The Tanakh includes the **Torah**, also known as the Hebrew Bible, as well as **Neve'im** and **Ketuvim**. A description of each section can be found below. Most Jewish texts are available in Hebrew, English, and transliterated Hebrew (Hebrew that has been printed phonetically in Roman script). Hebrew is read from right to left. Hebrew books, therefore, open from left to right.

The **Torah** (תּוֹרָה, literally "Teaching") also known as the Hebrew Bible or Pentateuch includes the Five Books of Moses. A portion of the Torah is read every week during Shabbat services.

Neve'im (נְבִיאִים, "Prophets") is the second section in the Tanakh. It contains the books of the Prophets. Along with the weekly Torah reading, a section of the Neve'im is read during Shabbat services each week. This is referred to as a *Haftorah* portion. The Neve'im begins with the Tribes of Israel entering Israel and ends with the Babylonian captivity.

Ketuvim (כְּתוּבִים, "Writing") is the last section of the Tanakh. It includes three groups of texts: Sifrei Emet, Chamesh Megillot, and other books. Traditions for reading this section vary by region and sect.

Siddur

The **Siddur** (סִדּוּר) is a Jewish prayer book. Here, we have one for weekdays and one for Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest. These **Siddurim** (the Hebrew plural for Siddur) are from the Reform tradition.

Please do not let the Tanakh, Torah, and Siddurim touch the ground. If you accidentally drop any of these holy texts, it is customary to lightly kiss it.

Qu'ran

The **Qu'ran** (القرآن, "Recitation") is the central religious text of Islam. It is divided into 114 chapters known as **Sura**, and verses or **Ayah**. The Qu'ran contains religious doctrine, history, and law. It is used during daily worship. Guidelines for handling the Qu'ran are:

- Before handling the Qur'an, one should be clean and free of impurities (the same goes for when reciting it).
- Please do not leave the Qu'ran open or unattended. When you are finished reading, please place it back on the bookshelf. Do not place other books or items on top of the Qu'ran.
- Please do not place the Qu'ran on the floor.
- Do not toss or lean on the Qu'ran.
- Do not write or doodle in the Qur'an.

Pure Land Buddhism: Dialogues with Ancient Masters

This book contains stories from ancient Buddhism and is a text for training. Please treat with respect.

Objects:

A **Tallit** (טלית) is a Jewish prayer shawl. It is worn during daily prayer and during services on holy days.

Tallitot are typically white with black or blue stripes, some may have other decorations. It can be made with cotton or silk. Tallitot are often given as gifts during important milestones such as a Bar Mitzvah or wedding. Our Tallit looks like a scarf and is worn draped over the shoulders.

Please do not let the Tallit touch the ground.

A **Kippah** (Hebrew) or **Yarmulke** (Yiddish) is a headcovering used by Jewish men and increasingly Jewish women during prayer, Torah study or while in a synagogue. As in many traditions, covering one's head is a sign of respect for God. Some Jewish men wear a Kippah/Yarmulke all the time. The Kippah in this room is blue suede, but they may be made in a variety of fabrics or with decorations.

Prayer Rugs are available in the cabinet. It is placed between the ground and the worshipper for cleanliness during the various positions of Islamic prayer, including prostration and sitting on the ground. These should be rolled up and stored away after use.

It is customary for Muslims to pray in the direction of Mecca. The wall directly across from the cabinet faces east.

Singing Bowl and Meditation Bell

In some Buddhist practices, singing bowls and/or meditation bells are used as a signal to begin and end periods of silent meditation. To use the singing bowl, hold the bowl with a flat palm. Use the mallet to strike the edge of the bowl to create a sound. The meditation bell can be held in one hand and the bell and mallet pulled together to produce a sound.

A bell of **Ghanta** is also used in Hindu and Jain temples to signify the beginning and end of prayer. It is a symbolic welcome from the gods and the expulsion of evil. The sound of the bell is believed to help keep the mind focused during prayer.

Idols are an important part of worship in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. It is believed that the visual depiction of the deity strengthens the worshippers connection to the divine. The following can be found in the Multi-Faith Prayer Room:

Lord Mahavir was the 24th Tirthankara (a spiritual teacher) and the founder of modern Jainism. In our picture, he is depicted as sitting against a red background.

Ganesh (गणेश) is worshipped by both Jains and Hindus as the protector of home and family life and the Remover of Obstacles. As such, he is often invoked before important events or new beginnings. He is also honored during the festivals of **Ganesh Chaturthi** and **Ganesh Jayanti**.

The wooden carving is a depiction of **Saraswati (सरस्वती)**, the goddess of knowledge and learning. **Vasant Panchami**, a festival celebrating Saraswati, is held in the Spring.

Kalasha (कलश) are vessels decorated with mango leaves and a coconut. The Multi-Faith Room has two small red Kalashas. They are auspicious symbols in both Hinduism and Jainism.

Using the bubbling fountain:

Some people find bubbling water to be soothing or meditative. To use the fountain, simply plug into the wall. If the water does not flow, check the back of the fountain and add water from the glass pitcher. Please remember to unplug it when you leave.

Meditation Cushions

Seated meditation cushions are often used to help extend meditative time and serve to elevate the hips and spine into proper alignment.

Prayer Bench

A prayer bench provides a way to kneel that is more comfortable for the knees and hips. To use, kneel and stay tall without sitting back on your heels. Place bench over your calves. Then sit back on the cushion.

Bibliography

The following websites were used in collecting the above material. They are also useful for anyone wishing to learn more about the items or religions represented here.

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**Thank you to everyone who donated holy texts and ceremonial objects to
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