

Meeting spiritual needs sustainably: moving towards diapraxis

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Environmental sustainability:

'A condition of balance, resilience, and interconnectedness that allows human society to satisfy its needs while neither exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystems to generate the services necessary to meet those needs nor by our actions diminishing biological diversity'

Morelli, J. (2011) 'Environmental sustainability: a definition for environmental professionals', *Journal of Environmental Sustainability*, 1, 19-27: 5.



Renewable energy solutions are becoming cheaper, more reliable and more efficient every day. Our current reliance on fossil fuels is unsustainable and harmful to the planet, which is why we have to change the way we produce and consume energy



The world's population is constantly increasing. To accommodate everyone, we need to build modern, sustainable cities. For all of us to survive and prosper, we need new, intelligent urban planning that creates safe, affordable and resilient cities with green and culturally inspiring living conditions.



Our planet has provided us with an abundance of natural resources. But we have not utilized them responsibly and currently consume far beyond what our planet can provide. We must learn how to use and produce in sustainable ways that will reverse the harm that we have inflicted on the planet.



A flourishing life on land is the foundation for our life on this planet. We are all part of the planet's ecosystem and we have caused severe damage to it through deforestation, loss of natural habitats and land degradation. Promoting a sustainable use of our ecosystems and preserving biodiversity is not a cause. It is the key to our own survival.

Pew Research Centre: Percentage, Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups (2015)

	2010	2050
	Population (est. regional total 742,550,000)	Population (est projected total 696,330,000)
Christians	74.4	65.2
Unaffiliated	18.8	23.3
Muslims	5.9	10.2
Jews	0.2	0.2
Hindus	0.2	0.4
Buddhists	0.2	0.4
Other religions	0.1	0.2
Folk religions (including African Traditional Religion)	0.1	0.2

Source: Pew Research Centre: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/europe/#:~:text=Europe%20is%20the%20only%20region,to%20454%20million%20in%202050.>



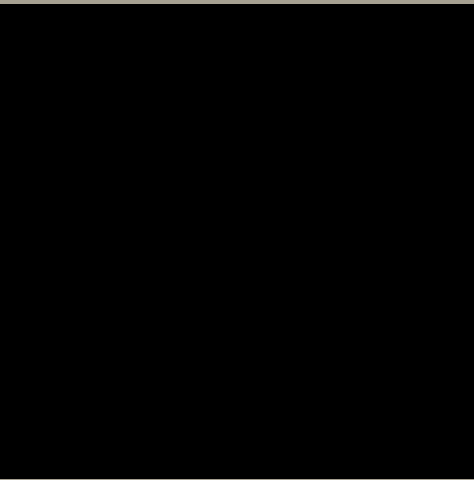
MailOnline

Outrage as crematorium takes down wooden cross that's been in place for more than 50 years because it might offend non-Christians



Garden free from religious symbols to be created at Mortonhall





Natural Burial

Traditional - Secular Spiritualities and
Funeral Innovation

Douglas Davies and Hannah Rumble



Chi Energy Gaia Oneness Self-help
Meditation Yoga Enlightenment
Positive Thinking Mindfulness Ayurvedic
Universe Zen Aura Vibrations Astrology
Awakening Law of Attraction
Christ-Consciousness Yin-Yang Esoteric
Cosmology Avatar Psychic Spiritualism
Tai Chi Gnosticism Chanelling UFOs

A silhouette of a person in a yoga pose, specifically a variation of the Bhujangasana (Cobra) pose. The person's arms are raised, and their hands are clasped behind their head. A lotus flower is positioned on their chest, and a small Buddha figure is at their base. Above the person's head is a circular diagram, possibly a mandala or a representation of a chakra.

European Convention on Human Rights, Article 18:

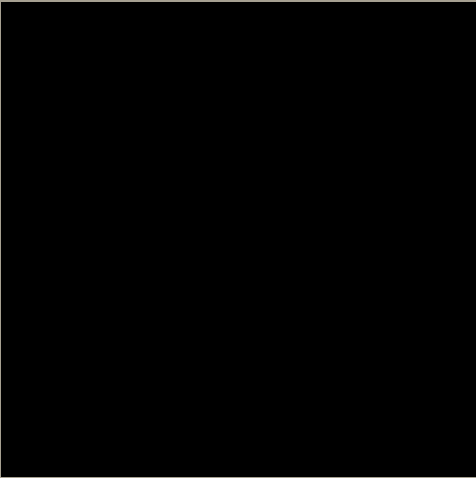
Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.



UN Sustainable Development Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

Promotes the 'social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, religion or other status'

Belief system (est. percentage adherents)	Principal disposal mode	Dead body	Body and soul	Site of interment	Commemorative practice	Doctrinal basis
Islam (26%)	Burial	Body integrity paramount; one body per grave	Sentience in the grave; resurrection in eternal afterlife; Prayers offer comfort to the dead	Grave orientation to face Makkah; consecration not required.	Visits must not imply veneration; material commemoration reflects cultural preference rather than doctrinal tents	Hadith, Fiqh (Qur'an not explicitly directive)
Judaism (<0.2%)	Burial	Body integrity paramount; one body per grave; no grave re-use; grave must be marked.	Physical resurrection in eternal afterlife; possible to elevate the soul through ritual action	Body is polluting; site exclusive to Jewish use preferred.	Visits at yahrzeit and other defined holy days;	Torah, Talmud and rabbinic 'responsa'
Christianity (32%)						
Protestantism	Cremation	Body is not theologically significant	Soul separates at death.	Consecration not required.	Grave visits have no theological importance	Bible
Roman Catholicism	Burial/cremation	Body integrity is not paramount, but cremation can imply pagan belief.	Soul remains in purgatory, relieved by prayer.	Burial in consecrated ground imperative.	Visits at holy days and festivals.	Bible, Papal annunciations
Orthodoxy	Burial	Body integrity is not paramount, but cremation can imply pagan belief.	Prayers are a comfort to the dead	Consecrated site with a central cross.	Visits at holy days and festivals.	Old Testament
African Traditional Religions (Folk Religions c. 5%)	Burial	Cremation implies disrespect to ancestors	Souls of dead ancestors play a role in the lives of the living	Ideally, close to the homestead. Cemetery can be regarded with some ambivalence	Continual dialogue between the living and the dead.	No textual authority
Buddhism (7%)	All modes, but cremation most common	Body integrity not paramount.	Ancestor spirits benefit from ritual actions	Burial must be in a location deemed propitious.	Grave visiting festivals and ancestor veneration at the grave and in domestic sphere.	Teachings of the Buddha
Hinduism (15%)	Cremation	Body is highly polluting. Cremation theologically imperative.	Soul is released by act of cremation.	Ashes must be released into sacred water, preferably Ganges.	Bone fragments may be buried, but the grave has no theological significance.	Śruti
[1] Pew Research Centre data from 2010, modelled by Statista in 2022: https://www.statista.com/statistics/374704/share-of-global-population-by-religion/#:~:text=Around%2025.8%20percent%20of%20the,of%20global%20populations%20as%20Hindu , accessed 4 Apr 2024						



Hindu man wins court battle for open-air cremation pyre

Court of appeal victory after Newcastle-upon-Tyne council refused Hindu resident permission for a traditional funeral

Guardian, 10 Feb 2010



Diapraxis:

‘Co-operation of groups of different religions, world-views and ways of thinking. Co-operation does not mean convincing each other or sharing their views. But participation in activities and solving problems together shares experiences that destroy stereotypes and build positive feelings towards each other. Diapraxis is an important means of intercultural and interreligious dialogue’

Step 3: Arrival : prepare burial with family and evaluate risks (continued)



9. Burial team to refer to separate guidelines for the dignified burial of Muslim and Christian patients.
10. Identify the family members who will be participating in the burial rituals (prayers, orations, closing of the coffin, ...). If the family has prepared a coffin, identify 4 family members to carry the coffin.
11. Verify that the grave is dug. If this is not the case, send selected people to dig the grave at the cemetery or at the area identified by the family . This site should be agreed upon by the local authorities and neighbours.
12. Propose to one or two family members to witness the preparation activities of the body of the deceased patient on behalf of the other family members.
13. Ask the family witness if there are any specific requests from the family or community, for example, about the personal effects of the deceased. The family should decide what to do with the personal effects of the deceased (burn, bury in the grave or disinfect).
14. Allow the family witness, family members to take pictures of the preparation and burial. At the request of the family, the Burial team may take pictures on their behalf.
15. Ask the family if they want to prepare a civil, cultural or religious item (e.g. identity plaque, cross, picture of deceased) for the identification of the grave.



World Health
Organization

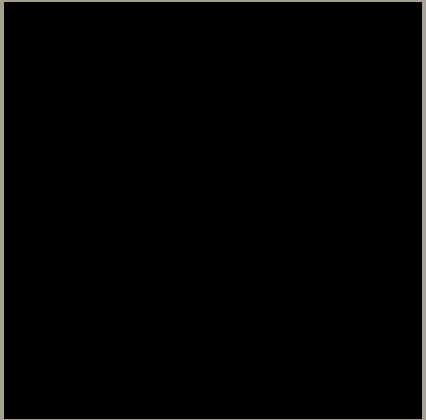
INTERIM GUIDANCE

How to conduct safe and dignified burial of a patient who has died from suspected or confirmed Ebola or Marburg virus disease

October 2017

Good diapraxis

- Increase religious literacy including understanding the interplay of different traditions, religious groups and tension between groups eg anti-Semitic or anti-Muslim agendas, being mindful of excluded voices within some groups;
- Stress that issues affect everyone equally: all funeral practices will have to change to meet SDGs. Everyone's practices are equally 'wrong' for the planet. Change is not being deployed to exclude or marginalise. Where expressing difference is important, explore alternative approaches;
- Higher-level doctrine supports protection for the planet and can alter in response to pragmatics eg climate emergency; and
- Work with and emphasise the positive aspects of funeral rituals: for example, working with the Muslim and Jewish communities to explore perpetuity in green burial sites; explore options to commemorate through charitable gifting.



Burying a body can be 'a less important good than preserving the environment, preserving land, avoiding financial jeopardy, or preventing the spread of infectious disease'.

Sr Renée Mirkes, Director of the Centre for NaProEthics of the Saint Paul VI Institutet, Omaha NE.

