

Interfaith: What Utahns Need to Know

RESEARCH SUMMARY

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

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Faith and religious identity play an important role in the lives of many Utahns, shaping personal values, community engagement, and belonging. While Utah is often associated with a single dominant faith tradition, its religious landscape is increasingly diverse, encompassing people from many faiths, spiritual traditions, and worldviews. Interfaith engagement can build understanding, reduce misconceptions, and foster collaboration around shared goals. As Utah grows more religiously and culturally diverse, creating opportunities for people of different beliefs to learn from and work alongside one another can strengthen communities and create a greater sense of belonging for all.

FAITH MATTERS

Faith continues to play a meaningful role in the lives of many Utahns. 63% of Utahns identify as Christian, including 50% who identify with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 45% of Utahns describe themselves as very spiritual and another 35% as somewhat spiritual. Nationally, nearly 75% of Americans report that their faith is an important part of who they are. Despite narratives about declining religious participation, research suggests that faith remains a major source of identity, meaning, and guidance. For many people, faith is expressed not only through formal religious participation but also through daily practices, values, relationships, and service to others.

GROWING DIVERSITY

The share of religiously unaffiliated Utahns more than doubled from 16% in 2007 to 34% in 2023, while several minority faith communities have grown rapidly. From 2010 to 2020, Hindu, Muslim, and National Baptist communities were among Utah's fastest-growing faith groups. As Utah's religious landscape evolves, fostering understanding across differences can strengthen community connections and belonging for all.

DEFINITION

"The word 'interfaith' describes an interaction between people of different religions or faith traditions. But it is more than that. It is about understanding our significant differences, but also recognizing our similarities, and working together for peace, justice, and healing in our world."

United Religions Initiative

SHARED SERVICE

Service is one of the strongest common threads connecting people of different faiths. Utah ranked first in the nation for volunteerism in 2023, with approximately 1.2 million residents volunteering through organizations. National research similarly finds that faith communities serve as important centers of belonging and connection. Across religious traditions, individuals often turn to faith communities for support during difficult times, opportunities to help others, and meaningful relationships. A shared commitment to service can bridge faith differences and foster collaboration around common goals and community needs.

INTERFAITH IN UTAH

- Faith is an important source of identity, purpose, and community.
- Interfaith connections help foster belonging across all faith traditions.
- Promotes trust, understanding, and cooperation.

COMMON GROUND

Despite differences in beliefs and practices, people of faith share many common values. More than eight in ten Americans believe the United States should be a place where people of all religious beliefs, and those with no religious beliefs, feel they belong. Around nine in ten identify freedom of religion, free speech, and equal rights as important American values, while more than seven in ten are open to engaging with people from different faith backgrounds. These shared commitments provide a strong foundation for understanding, belonging, and connection across faith communities.

Many Americans, however, underestimate how strongly faith groups other than their own support pluralism and inclusion. Research shows that people often assume religious communities are less welcoming or accepting than they actually are, creating unnecessary division and obscuring shared values. Interfaith engagement helps replace assumptions with understanding, creating opportunities for people to build trust, challenge stereotypes, and strengthen a sense of belonging. As people learn more about one another's experiences and beliefs, they are more likely to find common ground and work together.



RIISING GENERATION

Although younger generations are often described as increasingly disconnected from religion, the reality is more complex. Nationally, 66% of Gen Z report that faith remains an important part of their identity, and young adults are more likely than average to seek belonging and community through faith traditions. While younger people may engage differently with faith communities than previous generations, connection, meaning, and purpose remain important priorities.

BUILDING BELONGING

Personal relationships across differences help reduce misconceptions and build understanding. People who have meaningful connections with individuals from other backgrounds are more likely to hold accurate perceptions and positive attitudes towards those groups. Interfaith engagement fosters trust, empathy, and mutual respect while helping people see one another as neighbors rather than stereotypes. These connections can strengthen communities and create a culture where differences are viewed as opportunities for learning rather than sources of division.

BRIDGING DIFFERENCES

Stronger communities begin with understanding. Utah's changing religious landscape presents an opportunity to build on the state's longstanding traditions of faith, service, and civic engagement. As religious diversity continues to grow, intentional efforts to increase understanding across faith traditions can help ensure that all Utahns experience a sense of belonging. Interfaith relationships do not require agreement on every belief or practice, only curiosity, respect, and a willingness to learn from one another.

Meaningful connections are built through personal interaction. Individuals can strengthen interfaith understanding by seeking opportunities to engage with people whose beliefs differ from their own. Attending an interfaith event, participating in a service project, visiting another faith community, or engaging in a genuine conversation can help replace assumptions with understanding. Personal relationships and small interactions can build trust, reduce stereotypes, and foster belonging across differences.

Collaboration across faiths can strengthen Utah's future. Faith communities, organizations, educators, and civic leaders can create spaces that encourage dialogue, partnership, and shared action. By elevating common values, supporting collaborative service efforts, and sharing stories that emphasize connection rather than division, communities can build on existing strengths. When people of different faith traditions and worldviews work together to serve their neighbors and address community challenges, they help create a Utah where diversity is valued and everyone feels welcome and included.

SUPPORT INTERFAITH CONNECTION IN UTAH

You can help build interfaith connections by creating opportunities to learn from, serve alongside, and engage with people of different faiths and worldviews. See below for calls to action and resources that can help ensure Utahns of all faith traditions and backgrounds feel welcome, respected, and connected within their communities.

Data Sources: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute: [Utah Demographic Characteristics \(2024\)](#), [UServe Utah: Utah Gives Back](#), [More in Common: Promising Revelations \(2024\)](#)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

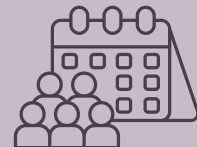
- **Learn More:** Explore resources in the UWLP Equality & Belonging [Resource Kit](#).
- **Review:** Find resources and community leaders on the Belonging Teams [webpage](#).
- **Get Involved:** Connect to the grassroots initiative, [A Bolder Way Forward](#).
- **Take Action:** Help move the needle and discover additional [Calls to Action](#) for individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.



Take time to get to know someone whose faith tradition or worldview differs from your own. Ask questions, listen with curiosity, and seek to understand their experiences and perspectives.



Volunteer alongside people from different faith communities. Participate in a shared service project and work together to address local needs.



Visit a community interfaith gathering, open house, cultural celebration, or religious service. Learning directly from others can increase understanding.

Learn more at www.utwomen.org

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