

This bimonthly newsletter, produced by Pastoral Care Services/Office of Diversity and Inclusion, will highlight some of the spiritual and religious beliefs held by patients and their families, providers and others in the MUSC community. It will offer strategies for staff self-care as well as information to better address the spiritual needs of the diverse patients and families that we serve.

#### Interfaith Calendar Highlights

- August 1. **Tish'a B'av** (Jewish). Day of fasting in remembrance of the destruction of the temple in 586 BCE and AD 70.
- August 15. **Krishna Jayanti** (Hindu). Commemoration of the birth of Krishna—the eighth incarnation of the god Vishnu, who took the form of Krishna to destroy the evil king Kansa.
- August 26 - September 4. **Paryushana Parva** (Jain). Festival signifying human emergence into a new world of spiritual and moral refinement. Marked by recitation from sacred writings and family exchange of cards/ letters.
- August 31. **Haji Day** (Islam). Pilgrimage rites in the holy city Mecca.
- September 1-4. **Eid al Adha** (Islam). Festival recalling Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to Allah.
- September 21-22. **Rosh Hashanah** (Jewish) / **Hijra** (Islam). New Year celebrations.
- September 22. **Mabon** (Wicca/Pagan). Observance of autumn equinox.
- September 30. **Yom Kippur** (Jewish). Day of Atonement, observed with strict fasting and repentance of sins.

Source: <http://www.interfaith-calendar.org>

## Spirituality Spotlight: Rastafarianism

by Chaplain Terry Wilson

The Rastafarian religion was developed in Kingston, Jamaica, in the 1920s and 30s. Rastafarians believe in the Judeo-Christian God, whom they call Jah. In general, Rastafarian beliefs are based in Judaism and Christianity, with an emphasis on Old Testament laws, prophecies, and the book of Revelation. The following terms, practices, and beliefs in the Rastafarian religion will help you to better understand patients of this faith.

**Jah** – Manifested on earth as Jesus, whom Rastafarians believe was black. Emperor Haile Selassie is referred to as His Imperial Majesty or H.I.M. (pronounced "him"), and believed to still be alive. He is worshipped as divine.

**End of Life** - Rastafarians do not believe in an after-life, but instead look to Africa ("Zion") as a heaven on earth. True Rastafarians are believed to be immortal, both physically and spiritually, a concept called "ever living." An important Rastafarian concept is "I and I," said instead of "you and I." It emphasizes the oneness between humanity and God as well as the equality of all humans.

**Death** - For Rastafarians, illness and death are the result of an interference with the course of nature. They are extremely proud of their health and vigor, which they attribute to upright living and to the use of herbs, especially ganja.

**Diet** - The most observant Rastafarians follow a dietary law called "ital", derived from the word "vital." Ital food is completely natural (not canned, free of chemicals and preservatives) and eaten raw.

**Health Care** - Rastafarians take a holistic approach

to healing. They believe that the concept of health extends to three spheres, namely mind, body, and soul, though sometimes the psychological and spiritual can be categorized together. Healing is an art. Its sphere of relevance applies not only to physical and mental illnesses, but also to what one may call 'ills,' which have their roots in social conditions. Rastafarian ideology dictates that human beings are so central to the cosmos that if there is an illness, God will have provided a cure for us. They acknowledge that for any condition there is both a spiritual and natural cause, though the first assumption is always that it is purely physical.

**Practices** - Rastafarians are well known for their religious use of **marijuana**. They call the cannabis plant "ganja", the holy herb, lley or callie, and believe it was given by God. The **nyabinghi** is a nighttime drumming and dance ritual held on Rasta holidays and special occasions. Nyabinghis can last for days and bring together hundreds of Rastafarians from all over Jamaica.

**Dreadlocks** - One of the most visible practices of Rastafarians is the wearing of one's hair in dreadlocks. Dreadlocks have several purposes and layers of meaning for Rastafarians, including: the biblical command not to cut one's hair (Leviticus 21:5); the appearance of a lion's mane, representing strength, Africa, Ethiopia, and the Lion of Judah. Many Rastafarians have dreadlocks, but all people with dreadlocks are not necessarily Rastafarians.

Sources: <http://www.religionfacts.com/rastafarianism>  
<https://caribbeanreligionvm.wordpress.com/category/natural-healing-and-medicine/>



This monthly program provides a forum for MUSC care team members to debrief difficult cases and share strategies to support families, colleagues, and themselves. One hour of Diversity Education training will be provided. Participants must register via MyQuest. The following programs are planned for August and September.

#### Religious/Cultural "Zebras" and Stereotypes

August 8, 2017  
1:30 pm - 2:30 pm  
300 Clinical Science Building (CSB)

#### Patient-Centered Care: Challenges and Rewards

September 12, 2017  
1:30 pm - 2:30 pm  
300 Clinical Science Building (CSB)

## Get to Know a Chaplain

In each issue, we will focus on a different member of MUSC Pastoral Care team.

**Came to MUSC in:** 1994

**Hometown:** Charleston, SC

**Education and Training:** Bachelor of Arts from Allen University; Master of Divinity from ITC Seminary; Clinical Pastoral Education residency at Grady Medical Center (Atlanta); retired pastor in the AME (African Methodist Episcopal) Church.

**As a chaplain, what do you bring to the MUSC team?** “Thirty-two years of combined experience in military and correctional chaplaincy, and psychiatric hospitals. I also bring wisdom and an appreciation of diversity and inclusion.”

**What do you do to relax?** “I enjoy gardening, Clemson University sports, and fishing.”

**What is one thing you wish people knew about chaplains that most don't?** “Never forget that chaplains/ministers are human and at times need support. Thank you to staff who encourage and support us.”

**Interesting/fun fact about you:** “I enjoy bringing Krispy Kreme donuts for the staff! Some people call me the Donut Chaplain.”

**Rev. Melvin Williams, M.Div**



### WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

Which of these things is most helpful when speaking to parents who have just experienced perinatal loss?

- Assuring them they can have other babies.
- Telling them their baby is now an angel in heaven.
- Inviting them to tell you about their baby if they would like to.

The first team member to respond with the correct answer will be recognized in a future edition of the newsletter. Send responses to [sergents@muscd.edu](mailto:sergents@muscd.edu)



### Stephanie Chomos, RN

Nursing Professional  
Development Specialist

Correct answer from the  
[June-July issue:](#)

- Speaking or praying in tongues.

## Helping Patients Through Perinatal

### Loss by Chaplain Stacy S. Lawton

It is not something anyone likes to think about, but perinatal loss is an issue we do sometimes have to face in healthcare. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) defines perinatal loss as “the loss of an infant through miscarriage, stillbirth, or neonatal death.” This can be a time of intense grief for parents, and everyone from family members and friends to health care providers can be unsure what to say to grieving parents. Here’s a list of some potentially hurtful things not to say, and some things that could be more helpful to say. (You can find more at [missinggrace.org](http://missinggrace.org).)

#### HURTFUL

- “He/she is in a better place.” *For parents, there is no better place for their baby than in their arms.*
- “At least it wasn’t a real baby (in reference to ectopic pregnancy, for example).”/ “At least you weren’t very far along.”/ “At least you have other children.”/ “At least you didn’t have time to get attached yet.” *Basically avoid anything that starts with “at least,” as it minimizes the loss.*
- “Everything happens for a reason.” *The loss of a child does not make sense to a parent.*
- “You can have another one.” *Even if this is true, a new baby does not replace the one lost.*

#### HELPFUL

- “I’m so sorry.” *Simply acknowledging the sadness of the loss is always okay.*
- “\_\_\_\_\_ is a beautiful baby.” *If the parents have said the baby’s name, it’s good for them to hear others say it, a way of affirming the “realness” of their child.*
- “Would you like to tell me about your baby?” *Even if their child never took a breath, parents often need to share memories of the pregnancy and dreams they had for their child, in order to grieve.*



Do you have topic ideas for future issues or would like to provide general feedback about the newsletter? If so, send an email to [sergents@muscd.edu](mailto:sergents@muscd.edu)  
**Chaplain Stacy S. Lawton, Editor**

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**Chaplains are available 24/7/365**