



Rastafarianism

Disclaimer

This resource has been prepared to help staff and students in raising awareness, increasing knowledge and to assist their work at MMU.

The resource has been prepared according to the 'Faith Communities Navigator' published in 2007 by the Faith Regen Foundation and guidance from

MMU Chaplains. The interpretation of the faith, observances and representation of standards etc. are part of this professional judgement and should not be construed as an authorised or official interpretation. MMU has sought to acknowledge the use of any published material in the text of this resource. Any inadvertent omissions deemed necessary will be corrected upon notification of this error.

Key beliefs

Originating in Jamaica in 1930, Rastafarianism is a religious and cultural movement that has many links with the Jewish and Christian faiths. The original devotees to Rastafarianism, known in short as Rastas, were Jamaicans led by Marcus Garvey, a charismatic Jamaican leader. He prophesied the crowning of Haile Selassie as King, God and saviour of the black people of the world. Ras (meaning Lord), Tafari (a family name) was the prince who, in 1930, was crowned Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, King of Kings, Lord of Lords.

Rastafarianism has now become more of a cultural 'Back to Africa' mass movements. Its beliefs are based on the Bible and Rastas interpret the Bible as an account of Rastafarian history. According to Rastas, when the 12 tribes of Israel were scattered, the spirit of the Lord went to Ethiopia; the Ethiopians became a chosen people. Ethiopia is seen as the Promised Land to which all black people will one day return.

Places of worship

Rastafari does not have a specific religious building that is set aside for worship. Rastafarians usually meet weekly, either in a believer's home or in a community centre; the meetings are referred to as Reasoning sessions.

Food and drink

Rastafarian dietary requirements are based on the Old Testament hygienic laws. Some Rastafarians eat only ital foods - foods that are pure and untainted, or otherwise natural. Milk, coffee and alcohol are all forbidden beverages. Rastas refuse to eat pork, lamb and some seafood. Many Rastas are vegetarian.

Festivals and Days of Worship

Rastafarians neither celebrate Christmas nor New Year. However, they do celebrate the birthday of the Emperor Haile Selassie on 23 July. Ordinarily, Rastafarians would wish to take annual leave on this date.

Dress

An orthodox Rasta will wear their hair in long flowing locks known as dreadlocks. To cut it is viewed as sinful. The dreadlocks symbolise the values of respect, power, freedom and defiance. Rastas cover their hair at all times. Rasta women keep their legs covered. Some Rastas will proudly wear the Star of David. The colours red, black, green and yellow hold special significance for a committed Rastafarian.

Bereavement

No specific requirements beyond that of normal compassionate leave.

The diversity calendar can be found at www.mmu.ac.uk/humanresources/equalities

This fact sheet has been produced using information found in the 'Faith Communities Navigator' published in 2007 by the Faith Regen Foundation and www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian with guidance from MMU Chaplains.