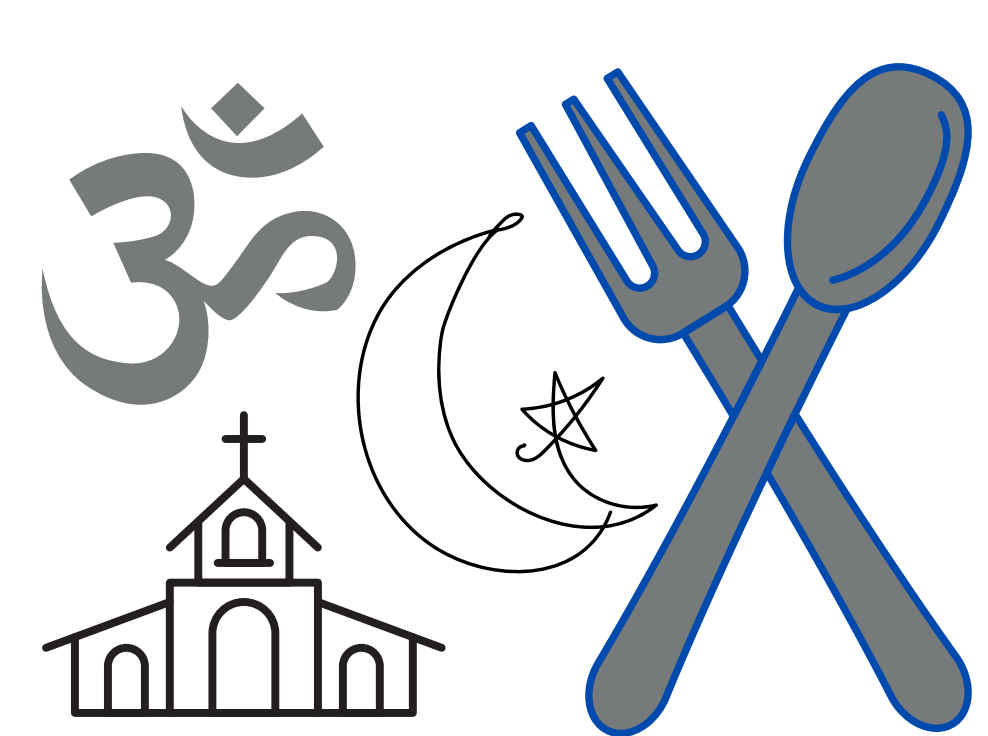


# Religion and Food Justice

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## Research Questions

1. Why are so many food banks and food justice projects affiliated with religious organizations?
2. Do religious dietary practices impact how people experience food insecurity?
3. Do people use religion to cope with hardships like food insecurity?

## Service for Food Justice is motivated by Religion

Those who volunteer have a collected sense of purpose and community. The volunteers work in an area that has a food insecurity problem and often looks to food pantries for assistance. Food banks and soup kitchens not only serve as a source of relief for those experiencing food insecurity, but also serve as a mechanism for relaying and enforcing religious notions to workers and the recipients. Additionally, team members at a secular urban farming collective for food justice expressed and reassessed their spiritual values through their work even if they identified as nonreligious.

## Food Practices and Religious Identity

Most religions offer guidelines for food practices. Food acts not only as sustenance but also as a communal tie to a specific religious tradition. Some religious people believe certain food consumption will change them or that the food will become incorporated with their body. Due to their closely-observed nature, some food practices are considered health threats to outsiders. However, studies show that lack of integral food for religious food practices, such as Halal food, can be considered both a religious and social inequality. As a religious minority in the U.S. facing internal and external pressure, Muslim Americans in a psychological study associated expressing their marginalized identity with following the food practices to maintain a connection to their culture. The needs of the food insecure, therefore, are not physical but also spiritual hunger in some cases.

## People turn to Religion in Times of Insecurity

Insecurities and religion are highly interconnected. It was found that there is a strong correlation between insecurity and strength of faith; those lesser off rely more on faith. This dependency is bolstered by one study where religious coping was found to play a part in the trauma recovery from drought. However, food supply chains being disrupted causing resource stress has also been shown to be more positively correlated to labor and food sharing than belief in higher gods. In other words, resource stress is a better predictor of sharing in a community than religious beliefs.

## Conclusion

From research findings, it is clear that religion and food justice are intertwined. Food plays a large part on religious identity and contributes to the communal aspect of religion. The community draws religious people to serve others in pursuit of food justice and those who face insecurities turn to religion in the face of food injustice.