**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**GRADE 9**

**Growing in Responsibility Handout**

**Judaism:** The most important stages in a Jewish life are birth, circumcision, reaching adulthood, marriage and death. These stages are marked by religious ceremonies. Circumcision is performed on a Jewish boy when he is 8 days old. Circumcision goes all the way back to Abraham in the Jewish scriptures. Both boys and girls are given Jewish names that have spiritual significance, in addition to their surnames. Family life and religious education in Judaism are very important. The mother has a major role in the religious education of her children. From age four onwards Jewish boys learn to read and speak Hebrew in order to prepare him for his Bar Mitzvah. A Bat Mitzvah ceremony is also held for girls and in some Synagogues a Bat Chayil ceremony is held instead. The Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies are important spiritual milestones in the life of Jewish children and an important celebration for the family. Once a young person has completed a Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremony, their first responsibility is to follow the teachings of the Torah.

**Christianity:** Christians believe that all children are a blessing from God and most churches welcome the birth of a new child with a religious ceremony. Some churches may have a service of blessing and dedication while others may conduct infant baptism. Christian parents hope that their children will grow up sharing their own Christian faith. Parents also take their children to church where they listen to stories from the Bible and are taught how to pray, worship and understand Christian teaching. In the homes children are encouraged to put the Christian faith into practice. Within Christianity there is no specific coming of age ceremony or ritual. However, in most churches there is a service that gives young people the opportunity to show that they have made the choice to accept Christianity as their own faith and made the decision to follow the teachings of Jesus. Two of these ceremonies are conformation and believers’ baptism.

**Islam:** At the heart of growing up in Islam is learning to read the Qur’an and learning to pray. From the earliest years Muslim children are taught by their parents that the Qur’an is different from very other book. They are taught how to handle the holy book with respect and care in the home and also at the masjid. If the child lives in a country where a majority of the population are Muslims, such as Pakistan and Indonesia, they will study the Qur’an each day at school. If not, they will attend special schools attached to the masjid called Madraseh. Learning to pray is also very important in Islam; boys are taught by their fathers and girls by their mothers. Children need to be taught two things about prayer: Wudu- washing ritual and Rak’ah- prayer routine. Learning good manners is also very important in Islam. Parents do this mainly by setting a good example for their children to follow.

Ramadan is the month of fasting in Islam. Young children are not allowed to fast but play a full part from age 13 onwards. Id-ul-Fitr is the festival which brings the fasting to a close and is an exciting time for children as they will wear new clothes and receive cards and presents from relatives and friends. There is no special ceremony in Islam to mark the time when a child becomes an adult. Instead emphasis is placed on the continual training and education of a child.