



UW-MADISON EXTENSION

Wisconsin 4-H and Religion Tip Sheet

March 2023

As a recipient of Federal funding, Wisconsin 4-H prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or family status.

Wisconsin 4-H celebrates individuals and their differences. Wisconsin 4-H has no formal affiliation with any religion nor does it endorse any religion. We acknowledge, however, that some planned activities may have associations or connections to major religions or religious holidays. Wisconsin 4-H encourages all staff and volunteers to be mindful of activities that have been historically associated with a particular religion or associated with a particular religious holiday. To be considerate of persons of diverse religious and spiritual beliefs, we encourage staff, volunteers, and participants to consider activities with no association to religions or religious holidays. For activities that have a historical affiliation with religious activities, we encourage you to consider the following guidance:

1. The program or activity should be secular in nature and not be based in a religious or spiritual practice;
2. The program or activity's purpose may educate or increase understanding without promoting religion; and
3. The program or activity will not confuse the identity of 4-H with the identity of a specific religion.

Questions Related to Religion & Wisconsin 4-H

Does Wisconsin 4-H formally affiliate with or endorse any particular religion or belief system?

No, Wisconsin 4-H does not affiliate with any particular religion or belief system.

Can 4-H Clubs include a reference to a specific religious tradition within their club or program names?

No, 4-H club, group or program names that promote specific religious perspectives or icons are not secular.

Can a 4-H Club or Group meet at religious spaces (i.e. churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, etc.)?

Yes, if there are no other spaces available. 4-H volunteers should contact their 4-H Program Educator to explore meeting location options. Please note that holding a 4-H meeting at a religious space could create an unwelcoming environment and the impression that 4-H is not open to all.

Can 4-H club members and 4-H volunteers lead religious prayers or readings?

No. However, 4-H club members and volunteers can share a moment of appreciation and reflection to create a welcoming environment.

Can a 4-H member give a speech about celebrating their individual faith?

Yes, individual 4-H members' freedom of speech is protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Can 4-H club members ring bells for the Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign?

Yes, the Salvation Army states as one of its goals to meet human needs without discrimination. 4-H members choosing to participate in bellringing as a community service option would be allowable.

Can a 4-H Club or Group Christmas Carol?

Yes, a 4-H Club or Group could Christmas Carol as an activity or service project if the songs are secular in nature. Examples could include: Deck the Halls, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman, Jingle Bells, 12 Days of Christmas, Silver Bells, etc. It is recommended that the club/group pre-select songs and that song books/handouts are available as not everyone may know the words to every song.

Can a 4-H Club or Group decorate a Christmas Tree?

Yes, the United States Supreme Court concluded in the case of *County of Allegheny v. ACLU* that a public Christmas tree was not a religious symbol. Based on this ruling, a 4-H Club or Group could decorate a Christmas Tree for public viewing if the decorations are secular in nature.

Can a 4-H Club or Group have a guest speaker that is presenting on a religious tradition like Diwali?

Yes, if the presentation is educational and does not advance or promote a specific religion.

Can a Club or Group sponsor an Easter Egg hunt?

Yes, if the program or activity is secular in nature and does not promote a specific religion. 4-H Clubs and Groups should consider if using the term “Easter Egg Hunt” or simply “Egg Hunt” would be more inclusive and inviting.

Can a 4-H Club or Group donate money to a church, mosque, synagogue, or temple?

Churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples are non-profit organizations and can receive a donation from a 4-H Club or Group if it follows the 4-H Financial Policies: Fundraising for an Outside Group or Organization.

Can a 4-H Club or Group partner with a religious organization to conduct a community service project?

Yes, 4-H clubs and groups can partner with a religious organization if the community service effort does not advance a particular religion and is focused on a community need.