

Religious & Spiritual Inclusion – Definitions of Key Terms

(St. Francis Xavier University)

StFX uses the terms below in ways consistent with Canadian human rights principles and the CAS Standards for Campus Religious and Spiritual Programs. These definitions support clarity and inclusivity by ensuring that all members of the community—Catholic, members of other faith traditions, spiritual, or non-religious—can see themselves reflected in our commitments and practices.

Religious

Refers to individuals or communities who identify with and practise a recognized religious tradition (e.g., Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, etc.). Religious identity may be expressed through worship, ritual, community participation, ethical commitments, or personal belief.

Faith Tradition

A shared system of religious belief, practice, values, and community identity. This term encompasses both majority traditions (e.g., Christianity) and minority traditions represented within the StFX community.

Spiritual

Refers to individuals who understand their values, meaning, purpose, or sense of connection through spiritual practices or beliefs that may or may not belong to a formal religious tradition. Spiritual identity may involve meditation, contemplation, nature connection, mindfulness, or other reflective practices.

Ecumenical

Refers specifically to collaboration, shared worship, or joint initiatives among Christian denominations. At StFX, ecumenical activities build on longstanding partnerships between the Catholic Chaplaincy and Christian communities within and beyond the campus.

Interfaith

Refers to dialogue, engagement, cooperation, or shared activities among people of different faith traditions. Interfaith initiatives encourage learning, respect, and relationship-building across diverse religious perspectives.

Multifaith / Pluralistic

Refers to a campus environment that accommodates, supports, and recognizes multiple faith and belief traditions. A multifaith or pluralistic approach ensures that individuals from various religious backgrounds—and those with no religious affiliation—are welcomed and provided equitable access to space, support, and opportunities for expression.

Non-Religious / Philosophical Worldviews

Refers to individuals who do not identify with a religious tradition. This includes people who may consider themselves agnostic, atheist, humanist, or “spiritual but not religious,” as well as those whose values or perspectives are grounded in philosophical or ethical frameworks rather than religious belief.

This terminology avoids conflating individual non-religious identities with secularism as a political or institutional philosophy. It simply acknowledges the diversity of perspectives represented within the StFX community.

Spiritual Wellness

A dimension of well-being that involves developing meaning, purpose, ethical understanding, and a sense of connection to self, others, or the wider world. Spiritual wellness may be experienced through religious practice, spiritual exploration, reflection, service, or cultural and community traditions.

Use of These Definitions

These terms guide StFX’s religious and spiritual inclusion practices, communications, programming, and consultation processes. They also support clarity for students, faculty, and staff engaging with the Religious Inclusion Action Plan, and campus partners.