

3738 religious associations are registered in Kazakhstan. Despite the differences, representatives of different faiths coexist peacefully and celebrate the holidays together, not divided by faith.

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Every morning at 6:30 AM, Deacon John, also known as **Bakhytzhан Mombaev**, arrives at the church and prepares for the service, which begins at 7:30 in the morning. He is from South Kazakhstan and adopted Orthodoxy Christianity at the age of 19.

His multi-religious family respects everyone's choice of religion and there are almost no debates on theological topics. However, the fact that he is a clergyman of the church sometimes arouses curiosity in society.

"My family is traditional for Kazakhs, even partially Islamic. Most of my relatives do not know about my choice, since it will be difficult for them to understand the whole story, so I did not inform them," Mombaev said.



Bakhytzhан Mombaev

According to him, he did not separate from his people and did not change his ethnicity after having become Orthodox. He considers himself a true Kazakh, loves his culture, history, language and people.

Everyone Is Equal

Orthodoxy is the largest branch of Christianity and the second largest religion in Kazakhstan. According to the Committee for Religious Affairs, there are 18 faiths and 3,738 religious associations in the country in total.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is democratic, secular, legal and social state whose highest

values are a person, his life, rights, and freedoms, as **Yerzhan Nukezhanov**, the Chairman of the Committee for Religious Affairs, said.

All our actions and all religions are performed according to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Article 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan

1. Everyone shall be equal before the law and court.
2. No one shall be subject to any discrimination for reasons of origin, social, property status, occupation, sex, race, nationality, language, attitude towards religion, convictions, place of residence or any other circumstances.

The largest religion in Kazakhstan is Islam. There are 2611 associations in the country. According to the 2009 population census, the share of Muslims in the country is higher than 70%.

The Central Asian Muslims adhere to Hanafi madhhab, which has always coexisted peacefully with other faiths in all places and at all times, says **Muhammad Hussein Alsabekov**, Deputy Supreme Mufti of Kazakhstan.

Friendly People

In addition to Islam and Orthodoxy in Kazakhstan, there are small religious associations, such as the Society for Krishna Consciousness, Mennonites, and Baha'i.



Timur Chekparbayev

Timur Chekparbayev, Almaty resident, turned to religion in the 90s, when he was a student. He remembers that after the USSR's collapse, people began to talk about spirituality more. Searching for answers to his questions, he became Baha'ist.

"I cannot tell that at any time I was perceived inappropriately. Even those people who had not heard of the Baha'i faith before were interested to learn more about it," Chekparbayev recalls.

Another Almaty resident, **Daniil Pavelko**, was born in the family of a pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Adventism appeared in Kazakhstan more than 100 years ago. The Germans brought it from Germany through Russia. Now, there are 42 churches in Kazakhstan.

Pavelko's life is tied with faith since childhood, although there were fierce for any religion Soviet times then.

"At school and in the army, many people tried to dissuade me from it. They said, religion is for illiterate people, you have good abilities and you need to give up faith in God. However, in an early age of my life I had personal experiences that made me realize that God exists. This personal experience helped me to make a choice," says Pavelko.



Daniil Pavelko



The synagogue in Almaty is the first in Central Asia built after the Soviet Union collapse. The first mentions of Jewish communities in Kazakhstan appeared during the times of the Great Silk Road. Today, there are about 40 thousand Jews in the country; synagogues are

founded in several cities. Prior to this, communities gathered in adapted residential houses.



Yeshaya Kogen

Chief Rabbi of Kazakhstan **Yeshaya Kogen** believes that he is very lucky to live in Kazakhstan.

“When I first came to Kazakhstan in 1994, I saw a completely different situation. The Kazakhs are very special and friendly people. They are a nation with a very high level of tolerance for everything,” says Kogen.

According to Bakhytzhan Mombaev, the tolerance is learned in childhood here, when kids are getting used to the fact that people of different religions and different ethnic groups live on the same street and in the same house:

For Easter, we paint Easter eggs, treat each other, on Muslim holidays, they slaughter a ram and treat neighbors with its meat.

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