

# Religion and Traditions - 2

The Australian **Jewish** community traces its foundation to the arrival of the first European settlers in 1788. There are about 4,000 Jewish people of Polish origin in Victoria. Life cycle events, family, and culture are all shaped by the holidays contained in the Jewish calendar. Once a week Jews celebrate the Sabbath, and every month of the Jewish year except one is marked by holidays, festivals, and observances. During Pesach\* families and friends gather together for Seder meals. The Jewish New Year marks the beginning of a period known as Ten Days of Repentance\*. During the festivities of Rosh Hashanah\*, which commemorates the anniversary of the creation of mankind, Jews traditionally eat many symbolic foods, such as apples dipped in honey for a sweet year. Yom Kippur\* (Day of Atonement) is the holiest day of the year, dedicated to mercy and forgiveness. It is a day of fasting and prayer, when Jews are commanded to abstain from eating, drinking, and intimate relations. Jewish people light the Chanukah\* candles for eight days to commemorate the miracle of the Temple in Jerusalem.

**Seventh-day Adventists** acknowledge the Bible as their only creed. The church was officially established in 1863 in USA. Adventists' church life is administered by a church board, consisting of congregation leaders. They usually have an ordained pastor whose responsibility might include two or three congregations and who attends to duties such as conducting funerals, weddings and baptism. Meeting every Saturday, Seventh-day Adventists focus their activities on fellowship, worship and social interaction. Adventists abstain from alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, many are vegetarians. The Church has a variety of counselling programs and provides community service workshops and youth camps. Seventh-day Adventists do not partake in Christmas or Easter festivities believing that these are traditions not articulated in the Bible. No images are used in worship. There are three Polish Adventist congregations in Melbourne, with approximately 500 members.

**The Russian Orthodox Church** is more than one thousand years old and has over 150 million adherents throughout the world. The doctrine of seven sacraments (Eucharist, baptism, confirmation, penance, Holy Orders, marriage and anointment of the sick) is one of its major characteristics. Hymns and religious art (icons) feature heavily in the daily life of church followers. Feast days and fast days are regulated according to the ecclesiastical calendar which is divided between movable and fixed holy days. The movable holy days are determined by the date of Easter. Next in importance to Easter are the "twelve great feasts". Fasting, as practiced in the Orthodox Church means abstinence from meat, fish, dairy products, olive oil, and wine.

**Jehovah's Witnesses** accept the Bible to be their only creed. Their modern history shaped up just over 130 years ago in the USA. Jehovah's Witnesses do not use images in worship and do not take part in interfaith movements. They meet at their congregation halls and consider clergy class and special titles improper. The Baptism ceremony is performed through complete immersion. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that taking blood into the body through mouth or veins violates God's laws and may refuse medical treatment necessitating blood transfusions. One of the main purposes of Jehovah's Witnesses is door to door preaching. It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of Jehovah's Witnesses of Polish background because they do not usually meet in language groups. There is a small Polish congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Sunshine.

\* Denotes names of Jewish festivals

