USCIS 100: 10. What is freedom of religion?

- *You can practice any religion, or not practice a religion.*

Colonists from Spain, France, Holland, England, and other countries came to America for many different reasons. One of the reasons was religious freedom. The rulers of many of these countries told their citizens that they must go to a certain church and worship in a certain way. Some people had different religious beliefs than their rulers and wanted to have their own churches.

In 1620, the Pilgrims were the first group that came to America seeking religious freedom.

Religious freedom was also important to the Framers. For this reason, freedom of religion was included in the Constitution as part of the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. The First Amendment states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The First Amendment also prohibits Congress from setting up an official U.S. religion, and protects citizens’ rights to hold any religious belief, or none at all.

USPS winter holiday postage stamps reflect American religious freedom:

- We can observe religious and secular traditions on Christmas, Hanukkah, or Eid.
- We can enjoy cultural celebrations during Kwanza and Lunar New Year.
- And we can ring in the New Year with old friends and new!

Religious Christmas (Forever Stamp)

Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25.

Contemporary Christmas (Forever Stamp)

Christmas is observed as a Federal Holiday. Many people enjoy Winter festivities.
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**Hanukkah (44 cents)**
The Festival of Lights
An eight-day Jewish holiday.

**Eid Mubarak (44 cents)**
A Muslim greeting:
"May you enjoy a blessed festival"!

**Kwanzaa (44 cents)**
A weeklong celebration held in the United States honoring universal African-American heritage and culture (December 26-January 1).

**New Year (Forever Stamp)**
New Year (01/01) is observed as a Federal Holiday

**Lunar New Year (Forever Stamp)**
Asian-Americans mark the arrival of Spring.