

Religious  
Accommodation  
Guidelines  
*February 2007*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Religion is the cornerstone of life for many people. Centennial College is committed to an inclusive learning environment that is the result of shared responsibilities by all. The diverse faiths enrich all of us at Centennial College. Customs, traditions and calendars from all different faiths need to be taken into consideration when planning college events.

I am very pleased with the advances our College has made towards increasing faith awareness and sensitivity to the multitude of religious and spiritual traditions represented in our community.

I am certain that this guide on significant faith days will serve as an invaluable reference in helping you to recognize and show respect for the importance of religious faith in our daily lives.

President Ann Buller

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge employees from the Toronto and York District School Boards who assisted with the development of the original Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices and Observance – A Guideline, from which this document has been adapted.

Reproduction of this document for use by the Centennial College community is encouraged.

This document was produced through the Vice-President, Academic and Chief Learning Officer's (VPA&CLO) office to assist with the implementation of our Centennial College Diversity Statement. As chair of the committee, Vicki Bismilla, the VPA&CLO would like to acknowledge committee members who worked on the document:

Eileen Burrows, President of Local 558  
Verona Francis-Barrett, Professor  
R.M. Kennedy, Professor  
Carmen Perillo, Professor  
Chet Singh, Professor  
Marian Smith, Coordinator, Signature Learning Experience  
Eva Sukhdeo, Support Service Officer

"Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, discrimination because of religion (creed) is against the law. Everyone should have access to the same opportunities and benefits, and be treated with equal dignity and respect, regardless of their religion. Religion includes the practices, beliefs and observances that are part of a faith or religion. It does not include personal moral, ethical or political views. Nor does it include religions that promote violence or hate towards others, or that violate criminal law. " ([www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca) dd. February 27, 2006)

## CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

### VISION

Transforming lives and communities through learning

### MISSION

Educating students for career success.

### VALUES

- We make every decision to support the career and personal development of learners;
- Our curriculum, teaching and services demonstrate that we value the diverse profiles of our learners;
- The most effective learning takes place within a positive environment characterized by knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers, teaching strategies that suit learners' needs and an atmosphere of dignity and mutual respect;
- We are accountable to our learners, our community and to the general public for the quality of the learning experiences we provide, for the resources we use and for the manner in which we treat all people. We evaluate all of our work as part of the work itself;
- To make the best decisions, we consult with and consider carefully the views of all parties, internal and external, who have an important perspective on an issue. We engage in academic debate with open minds in an atmosphere of mutual respect;
- We value and support one another in whatever role we have within Centennial, in a process of continuous learning and improvement.

### DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Centennial College and its Board of Governors (BoG) value and embrace diversity, equity and inclusion as fundamental to our mission to educate students for career success within a context of global citizenship and social justice.

We recognize that historical and persistent inequities and barriers to equitable participation exist and are well documented in society and within the College.

We believe individual and systemic biases contribute to the marginalization of designated groups. These biases include race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, colour ethnicity, culture, linguistic origin, citizenship, creed (religion, faith), marital status, socio-economic class, family status, receipt of public assistance or record of offence. We acknowledge that resolving First Nations sovereignty issues is fundamental to pursuing equity and social justice within Canada.

We acknowledge the richness and diversity of the community we serve. As our community has evolved, and our staff and student population change, we have implemented policies and practices to address issues of inclusion. In moving forward, we will build on this work to embed commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in every aspect of what we do.

## **ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK**

We support the career and personal development of our learners in every decision we make. We value and support one another in a process of continuous learning and improvement.

We create a positive environment for effective learning within a context of global citizenship and social justice. We value the diverse profiles of our learners. Our curriculum, teaching and support services are characterized by knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers, teaching strategies that suit learners' needs and an atmosphere of dignity and mutual respect.

We strive for excellence. Scholarly debate and applied research contribute to the quality and distinctiveness of our learning environment and advance our instructional and curriculum expertise.

We encourage and engage in evidence-based deliberation with open minds in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We consult with and consider carefully the views of internal and external stakeholders who have an important perspective on an issue.

We are accountable to our learners, our communities and to the public for the quality of the learning experiences we provide, for the resources we use and for the manner in which we treat all people. We build evaluation into all our work so that we improve continuously.

## General Guidelines & Procedures for Religious Accommodation

### A. Introduction

Centennial College values the uniqueness and diversity of its students, staff and community, and understands that people from diverse faith communities need to work and study in environments that are safe, supportive and respectful. We also acknowledge that different faiths enrich all our lives at Centennial College.

It is important that the College actively promote both the freedom of religion that is protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the protection from discrimination and harassment based on religion that is part of the Ontario Human Rights Code. Implementing inclusive strategies demands constant review, development and evaluation of new knowledge and new approaches. The College believes that the process of accommodation and partnership with members of its community will help to build an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

The purpose of these guidelines is to explain substantively the many aspects of religious accommodation.

While this document provides reference information regarding religious accommodation in the College, the College acknowledges the fact that many of those who study and work at the College do not have religious affiliation. The College assures these members of its community that the religious accommodation guidelines do not compromise their rights and privileges. In addition to these guidelines for religious accommodation, this document also provides reference to:

1. The legislative and policy context for religious accommodation.
2. Appendices that briefly describe some of the religions of the employees and student body of Centennial College, noting the practices and observances that may need accommodation. The descriptions have been developed in consultation with faith group representatives from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.
3. Centennial Diversity Statement.
4. College Policy
5. Centennial College Accommodation Policy for Employee & Employment Applicants.
6. Academic Framework.

These guidelines<sup>1</sup> delineate courses of action for all members of the college community who work in or are associated with the College for achieving an inclusive learning and working environment. The expectation is that the curriculum, teaching methods, and management practices of the College will support the values embodied in this document. As well, it is essential the College makes every effort to promote religious equity and remove any discriminatory barriers experienced by members of religious communities in employment policies and practices, and in access to programs, resources, and facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> A Guideline is a recommended course of action consistent with the College's Mission, Values and policies. Respect for faith diversity is a shared responsibility. The College works to ensure that students and employees are able to observe the tenets of their faith, free from harassment or discrimination. It is the responsibility of the students and the community to assist the College in understanding the needs of the many religious communities that make use of Centennial's resources.

## **B. Legislative and Policy Context**

Centennial College exists within the broader context of law and public policy that protect and defend human rights. At Centennial College, specific policy statements have been developed that reinforce federal and provincial legislation.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects freedom of religion. The Ontario Human Rights Code protects an individual's freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviour based on religion.

Centennial College recognizes and is committed to the values of freedom of religion and freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviour based on religion through its policy.

### **B1. Building an Inclusive Community**

*The college supports an inclusive environment and will make every effort to plan for the religious needs of students and employees. Request for religious accommodation is a right and will not be viewed by the college as a hardship. In the rare incident(s) of undue hardship the college will convene a meeting with equitable representation to arrive at a resolution.*

### **B.2 Accommodation Based on Request**

*The College will take reasonable steps to provide accommodation to individual members of a religious group where the operations of the College interfere with their ability to exercise their religious beliefs and practices. The College will make its decision to accommodate based on the legal parameters of undue hardship. This includes the cost of the accommodation to the College, health and safety risks to the person requesting accommodation and to others and effect of the accommodation on the College's ability to fulfill its functions.*

***These guidelines are meant as information and not meant to be used for multiple faith day entitlements for college employees. Please refer to the appropriate collective agreement and refer to the Centennial College Accommodation Policy for Employee & Employment Applicants.***

### **B.3 Unresolved Requests**

*Despite the College's commitment to accommodate, an individual may feel that discrimination based on religion has occurred. The College, through its policy and the Collective Agreements, will take reasonable steps to address the unresolved issues raised by the affected person. (See Centennial College Accommodation Policy Process Chart.)*

## **C. Definitions**

### **Accommodation**

The Ontario Human Rights Policy Guidelines on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances defines "accommodation" as a duty corresponding to the right to be free from discrimination.

The duty to accommodate then, is an obligation that arises when requirements, factors, or qualifications, which are imposed in good faith, have an adverse impact on, or provide an unfair preference for, a group of persons based on a protected ground under the code. The duty to accommodate is not required where it would cause an undue hardship.

## **Creed**

*Creed is not a defined term in the Code. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has adopted the following definition of creed:*

*Creed is interpreted to mean "religious creed" or "religion". It is defined as a professed system and confession of faith, including both beliefs and observances or worship. A belief in a God or Gods, or a single Supreme Being or deity is not a requisite.*

*Religion is broadly accepted by the Commission to include, for example, non-deistic bodies of faith, such as the spiritual faiths/practices of aboriginal cultures, as well as bona fide newer religions (assessed on a case-by-case basis).*

*The existence of religious beliefs and practices are both necessary and sufficient to the meaning of creed, if the beliefs and practices are sincerely held and/or observed.*

*"Creed" is defined subjectively. The Code protects personal religious beliefs, practices or observances, even if they are not essential elements of the creed, provided they are sincerely held.*

*It is the Commission's position that every person has the right to be free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour that is based on religion or which arises because the person who is the target of the behaviour does not share the same faith. This principle extends to situations where the person who is the target of such behaviour has no religious beliefs whatsoever, including atheists and agnostics who may, in these circumstances, benefit from the protection set out in the Code.*

*In either situation, creed must be involved—either because the person who is the subject of the discrimination is seeking to practice his or her own religion, or because the person who is harassing or discriminating is trying to impose their creed on someone else. In both cases, creed must be involved.*

*Creed does not include secular, moral or ethical beliefs or political convictions. This OHRC policy does not extend to religions that incite hatred or violence against other individuals or groups or to practices and observances that purport to have a religious basis but which contravene international human rights standards or criminal law. ([www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca) dated February 27, 2006.)*

*(Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances, Ontario Human Rights Commission, October 20, 1996, Page 2.)*

*"The Code provides the right to be free from discrimination, and there is a general corresponding duty to protect the right: the "duty to accommodate." The duty arises when a person's religious beliefs conflict with a requirement, qualification or practice. The code imposes a duty to accommodate based on the needs of the group of which the person making the request is a member. Accommodation may modify a rule or make an exception to all or part of it for the person requesting accommodation." (Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances, Ontario Human Rights Commission, Oct. 20, 1996. p. 5)*

## D. Areas of Accommodation

For many students and employees at Centennial College, there are a number of areas where the practice of their religion will result in a request for accommodation. These areas may include but are not limited to the following:

- observation of major religious holy days and celebrations
- prayer
- dietary requirements
- fasting
- religious attire
- ablution (e.g. washing of hands, face & feet)
- participation in daily activities and curriculum (refer College Policy).

When concerns related to beliefs and practices arise in the College, collaboration among students, employees, the College and religious communities is often needed in order to develop reasonable accommodations. Building trust and mutual respect is an important aspect of faith accommodation. It is the role of all employees to ensure fairness and respect for the diverse religious beliefs and practices.

## E. General Guidelines and Procedures for Religious Accommodation

The following are general guidelines to be followed when determining accommodation for religious purposes. These general statements do not name specific religions, but simply refer to common areas of concern.

### E.1. Religious Holy Days and Celebrations

#### **College**

*All employees and students who observe religious holy days should be informed of their rights for accommodation and allowed leave without having to undergo unnecessary hardship in requesting the leave.*

*The College must make every reasonable effort to be aware of observances of their employees, students and community. The College **will not schedule examinations or special events on the world's most populous religious holy days that are listed below:***

#### **World Faith Days**

<i>Baha'i</i>	-	<i>Ridvan</i>
<i>Buddhist</i>	-	<i>Lunar New Year/Chinese</i>
<i>Christian</i> <i>(Western)</i> <i>(Eastern)</i>	-	<i>Christmas</i> <i>Good Friday</i> <i>Christmas</i> <i>Holy Friday</i>
<i>Hindu</i>	-	<i>Diwali</i>
<i>Jewish</i>	-	<i>Rosh Hashanah (2days)</i> <i>Yom Kippur (plus preceding evening)</i> <i>Passover/Pesah (first day)</i>

- Muslim - Eid-ul-Fitr  
Eid-ul-Adha
- Sikh - Baisakhi

A list of major religious holy days/dates is provided on my-Centennial and the council website ([www.thecouncil.on.ca](http://www.thecouncil.on.ca) – click on Interesting Links then click on Religious Holidays).

### **Managers/Supervisors**

Managers/Supervisors are to refer to the list above of World Faith Days when scheduling meetings, exams and other events.

Managers/Supervisors are legally responsible for religious accommodation in their areas. They have the responsibility to respond to employees' requests for religious accommodation in a reasonable and timely manner. (Employees/students may request accommodation for specific holy days that are not included in the above list of World Faith Days.)

### **Employees**

**Employees requesting leave should advise their supervisor in writing at least two weeks in advance.** Requests for holy days that are based on lunar cycles should be made in writing to the supervisory/chair as soon as possible.

Please refer to the Accommodation Policy that is posted on the intranet under Policies and Procedures – Human Resources.

### **Faculty**

Faculty requesting leave for religious accommodation **should advise their supervisor/chair in writing during SWF and timetable discussions.** Requests for holy days that are based on lunar cycles should be made in writing to the supervisory/chair as soon as possible.

**Faculty are responsible to respond in a reasonable and timely manner to requests for religious accommodation by their students.** Students may request accommodation for specific holy days that are not included in the list above of World Faith Days. (Refer to The Council list at [www.thecouncil.on.ca](http://www.thecouncil.on.ca) – click on Interesting Links then click on Religious Holidays.)

In the case of an approved absence for religious holy days, major tests or exams should be rescheduled for the student.

### **Students**

Students requesting absence from class/es for special religious holy days **should advise their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester.** Requests for holy days that are based on lunar cycles should be made in writing as soon as possible to the professors.

## **Unresolved Requests**

*Despite the College's commitment to accommodate, an individual may feel that discrimination based on religion has occurred. The College, through its policy, will take reasonable steps to address unresolved issues raised by the affected person. Please refer to the Collective Agreements and/or Accommodation Policy for resolution procedures.*

## **Recognized Faith Days**

*Please refer to the College Compensation and Appointment Council website ([www.thecouncil.on.ca](http://www.thecouncil.on.ca) – click on Interesting Links then click on Religious Holidays) for a list of recognized faith days. Employees are required to familiarize themselves with these dates.*

### **E2. Prayer**

#### **Guidelines**

*The College will make every reasonable effort to accommodate the requirement for daily prayer by providing an appropriate location at each campus. This may mean a quiet space in the library, an empty room, or wherever it is mutually satisfactory for the College and the student or employee requesting the accommodation. Washing facilities will also be provided for ablution.*

### **E3. Dietary Requirements**

#### **Guidelines**

*Centennial should be attentive to the dietary restrictions of the various religious groups. This includes attending to issues related to the **menus provided by the catering firms** and catering for special occasions and events at the College.*

### **E4. Fasting**

#### **Guidelines**

*The College should accommodate and respect religious practices related to fasting periods (e.g. allowing students to break their fast when it is required during class).*

### **E5. Religious Attire**

#### **Guidelines**

*The College should accommodate students'/employees' attire that is related to their religious practice. Religious attire is not cultural/traditional dress; it is a requirement of religious observation. Religious attire includes but is not limited to:*

- *hairstyles*
- *yarmulkes/kippah (skullcaps), turbans, Rastafari headdress*
- *head covers (e.g. hijab)*
- *crucifixes, Stars of David, etc.*
- *items of ceremonial dress*
- *modesty of attire*

*In programs where uniforms are worn, administrators may ask the students to wear religious attire in the same colour as the uniforms (e.g. the hijab); however, there may be religious requirements that cannot be modified.*

*Harassment about religious attire is one of the most common types of harassment. College employees should be sensitive to this and be proactive in setting a climate of respect and understanding.*

## **E6. Curriculum Content**

### **Guidelines**

*Religious accommodation at the College is carried out in the larger context of the secular public education system. While the College works to create a system that is free from religious discrimination, this freedom is not absolute. The College will limit practices or behaviour which may put public safety, health, or the human rights and freedoms of others at risk. As well, the College will limit practices or behaviour that is in violation of other College policies.*

*When a request is made for accommodation that relates to the content of curriculum and where there is an alleged conflict with a religious requirement (e.g. wine/alcohol tasting in hospitality program), the faculty/chairperson and student/s should refer to the college policy and/or seek advice from the Office of the Dean of Equity & Inclusivity if a resolution is not imminent.*

## Description of Religions, Practises and Observances

The descriptions of religions that follow have been developed in consultation with faith group representatives from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care to provide guidance to the College regarding religious accommodation requests. The descriptions outline aspects of the religion that may require accommodation by the College as stated in the Centennial Guidelines for Religious Accommodation.”

These descriptions are intended for use by those who are not familiar with the different religions. The descriptions cover those practices and observances of religions (including those followed by more orthodox members) that may lead adherents to ask for accommodation from the College. Although these **are not full explanations of the religions**, they provide sufficient information for College personnel to use when considering a request for accommodation.

Individuals in all religions make personal decisions about the practice of their faith. While some individuals may not have need for accommodation from the College to practise their religion freely, others do. In addition, religious practice varies somewhat within some religions, and there are varying levels of orthodoxy. Therefore, **the descriptions that follow do not necessarily describe the beliefs and practices of all those who follow the religion under discussion**. The College has been guided by the faith groups in developing these descriptions.

A large number of communities were initially and originally contacted for this project. **Only those whose practices and observances may require accommodation have been included**. The list is not exhaustive. For information about other religious communities, consult “The Multifaith Information Manual” © Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care, 2000, or contact the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care, 789 Don Mills Road, Suite 608, Toronto, Ontario M3C 1T5, telephone: (416) 422-1490, e-mail: [omcsrc@omc.on.ca](mailto:omcsrc@omc.on.ca) Website: [www.omc.on.ca](http://www.omc.on.ca) . The role of the College with respect to religious requirements, practices, and observances is to make suggestions for possible accommodations when they are requested. The College does not otherwise comment on matters of religion.

## BAHÁ'Í

### Introduction

Founded by Baha'u'llah (meaning "The Glory of God") in 1844, the Bahá'í Faith is a monotheistic religion. The basic beliefs are as follows:

- The oneness of God, the oneness of religions, and the oneness of humanity.
- The purpose of religion is to unify humanity.
- All great religions and prophets are divine in origin.
- All great religions represent successive stages of divine revelation throughout human history.
- The eradication of racial and religious prejudice.
- The search for truth as an individual responsibility.
- The harmony of religion and science as complementary aspects of the truth.
- The establishment of an international auxiliary language.
- Basic education for all children.
- Abolition of extreme wealth and poverty.
- Equality of the sexes.

### Prayer & Worship

#### Beliefs and Practices

Daily prayer and reading of sacred Bahá'í writings is the individual's responsibility. All work performed in the spirit of service is also considered to be worship.

#### Observations of Bahá'í Holy Days

#### Beliefs and Practices

There are nine Holy Days throughout the year:

Bahá'í New Year "Naw-Ruz"  
 First Day of the Festival of Ridvan  
 Ninth Day of the Festival of Ridvan  
 Twelfth Day of the Festival of Ridvan  
 The Declaration of the Bab  
 The Ascension of Baha'u'llah  
 The Martyrdom of the Bab  
 The Birth of the Bab  
 The Birth of Baha'u'llah

*(This information was developed in consultation with the Spiritual Assembly of The Bahá'ís of Toronto.)*

## BUDDHISM

### The Religion

Buddhism was founded by Lord Shakyamani Buddha, 539 B.C. Buddhism is essentially a monastic religion. However, Lord Buddha also taught spiritual practices for lay people to follow.

All paths of Buddhism embrace the basic teachings of Lord Shakyamani Buddha known as the Four Noble Truths:

1. **Dukkha:** Ordinary existence is a state of suffering
2. **The Arising of Dukkha:** Cause of Suffering
3. **The Cessation of Dukkha:** End of Suffering
4. **The Path:** Embracing the Teachings of Lord Buddha

The only method by which one can attain liberation from suffering is to follow the path of Buddhism. This requires mental discipline and the actual practice of Buddha's teaching which involves many lifetimes of devoted effort and commitment. For lay people the eightfold noble path involves Wisdom, Right Understanding and Right Intention. Ethical Discipline: Right Speech, Right Action, Right Means of Livelihood. Mental Discipline: Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. There are five precepts that deal with all aspects of life, body, speech, and mind. Body: 1. Abstention from killing; 2. Abstention from stealing; 3. Abstention from sexual exploitation. Speech: 4. Abstention from lying. Mind: 5. Abstention from all drugs and intoxicants which alter the mind.

To worship, Buddhists meet in a group in temples or centres to learn spiritual practices, and follow up with individual practice. (Source: *Multifaith Information Manual*)

### Dietary Considerations

Buddhism recommends people eat foods that are grown in their particular location of the world. As well, it is recommended that people eat food that is needed for their unique health requirements, which may not necessarily be vegetarian. However, many Buddhists are strict vegetarians, meaning no eggs, dairy, fish, or meat.

*(This information was developed with Gen-La Venerable Lama Tenzin Kalsang, Faith representative from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.)*

## CHRISTIANITY

### The Religion

Christianity is the religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ who lived in first-century Palestine. It is the largest religion in the world with approximately one and a half billion followers. Members fall into three major traditions: Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. Although a wide variety of structures of church organization and forms of worship exist, all Christians confess faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God who came into the world to bring together God and humanity. Please refer to Appendix 2 for a list of Christian churches.

Christianity is a historical religion which has its roots in Judaism. The term “historical” means God acts in human history and through human beings. This means God acts throughout history in such people as Abraham, Moses, the prophets (such as Isaiah) and the apostles.

The sacred text for Christians is the Bible that consists of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. The Bible traces the activity of God in human history from the beginning of time. Within the Bible are the four Gospels (meaning Good News) that tell of the life and teachings of Jesus. Christians believe God speaks to them through the Bible. The source of Christian teaching is found in the words and actions of Jesus Christ as found in the Gospels. Christians look to the teachings and actions of Jesus Christ as a pattern for their own lives. Baptism is the rite of initiation for new believers and one grows in the Christian life by studying the Bible, and by regularly gathering together with other Christians to worship God.

Jesus’ message can be summed up in the commandments to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself. Christians demonstrate compassion for others and work for justice and peace. The Salvation Army and World Vision are two of many organizations which embody these principles.

### Beliefs

Christians believe in one God who is the creator of all things and who desires a loving relationship with all people. People have the God-given freedom to choose to break that loving relationship and this is what Christians mean by the word “sin”. Christians believe that God sent His only Son, Jesus, to bring together God and humanity through his death on the cross and his resurrection. Belief in Jesus as Saviour means that sins are forgiven and one can enter into a new relationship with God. Through belief in a living Lord, Christians believe that eternal life with God awaits them after death.

Christian belief has been defined through the historical Apostle’s and Nicene Creeds. It includes the belief in Incarnation, that is, that “God became flesh and dwelt among us” in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Also included is the belief in a triune God consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God’s Spirit existing and operating in all creation. The Atonement, in which Christ died on the cross for the sins of the world, and the Resurrection are all common beliefs.

### Prayer and Worship

Worship in Christianity varies from quiet meditation to liturgical prayer.

The major holy days of the Christian year are Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Ascension.

*(This material was prepared by the York Region District School Board in consultation with local churches.)*

## HINDUISM (HINDU DHARMA)

### The Religion

The term Hinduism is commonly used to describe the oldest continuous religion in the world. A more precise and widely used term for describing this belief system is SANATANA DHARMA or HINDU DHARMA. The Hindu Dharma originated in India. The followers of Hinduism are referred to as Hindus. The principal scriptures of Hindus are the Vedas. Because of the antiquity of Hinduism, as well as its inclusiveness and tolerance for diverse expressions and beliefs, an extensive array of philosophical doctrines and dogmas has evolved. This has resulted in the appearance of additional scriptural texts such as the Upanishads, Puranas, Ramayana, and the Bhagavad Gita. Hinduism can be considered as a monotheistic religion, where the monotheistic concept of God is considered as not one God, but only God. The Ultimate Reality is called Brahman. Hindus believe that the unmanifest Brahman has an apparent manifestation as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. They comprise the Hindu Trinity, where Brahma is the Creator, Vishnu is the Preserver, and Shiva is the Dissolver. Brahman also manifests as the world of multiplicity and plurality, and assumes divine physical forms (avatar) from time to time for the preservation of righteousness. Three prominent avatars are Rama, Krishna, and Buddha. The many propitiating and presiding Deities worshipped by many Hindus are considered as various aspects of Brahman, and not a substitute for the supreme impersonal Brahman.

There are many prominent concepts and tenets enshrined in Hinduism that have universal relevance and applications. Some of these are:

- The Immanency of Ishwara Avatar (Manifold Incarnations of God)
- The Theory of Punarjanma (Reincarnation)
- The Law of Karma (Action and Reaction)
- The Doctrine of Maya (Illusiveness of Nature)
- The Principle of Gunatraya (Three Gunas of Nature)
- The Proclamation of Varnashrama Dharma (Chaturvarga – Four Objectives of Life  
Chaturashrama – Four Stages in Life; Chaturvarna – Four Caste Division)
- The Practice of Sadharana Dharma (Virtues of Purity, Austerity, Detachment, Morality, and Non-Injury)
- The Observance of Sadhana Yoga (Karma Yoga – Yoga of Action; Bhakti Yoga – Yoga of Devotion; Jnana Yoga – Yoga of Knowledge).

Hindus use a variety of sacred symbols during worship that go back thousands of years. Some of these are the OM, Swastika, Trishul, Shivalingam and Nataraja. Most Hindu rituals are performed in the presence of many of these symbols. Moorties (icons) of the various Deities are also used during worship. Fire offerings (Hawan) is an integral component of all Hindu worship. During worship, devotees must be dressed appropriately and the body is usually adorned with sacred religious symbols such as Chandan (red vermilion or sandal paste or ashes, applied to the forehead as a dot or any other symbolic shape).

### Prayer and Worship

#### Beliefs and Practices

Devout Hindu students need to pay homage to Saraswati Devi (Deity of Knowledge and Learning) prior to starting their classes. This is usually done in the early morning before formal teaching and learning commences. The space used for worship is considered sacred, and should be conducive to spiritual growth and development.

## **Observations of Holy Days**

### **Beliefs and Practices**

The dates for each of the days of significance will vary from year to year because dates are calculated on the lunar and solar astronomical alignments.

#### **1. Diwali (Deepawali)**

Diwali is one of the most widely celebrated Hindu festivals. It is commonly known as the Festival of Lights. Diwali has many meanings, the most important being the celebration of the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and happiness over suffering.

#### **2. Other Significant Holy Days**

- Janam Ashtami (Birth of Lord Krishna)
- Ram Navan-Li (Birth of Lord Rama)
- Maha Shivaratri (Appearance of Lord Bhagavan Shiva)
- Navarathri (Nine days of Fasting and Worship)
- Thai Pongal (Day of Thanksgiving)
- Holi (Spring Festival)

### **Navarathri Fasting**

Hindu students and staff may fast during the nine days of Navarathri which occurs during spring and autumn. During this time they will not eat or drink during the day.

### **Dietary Requirements**

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

Many Hindus are strict vegetarians. Meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products are not allowed in these diets. Some Hindus are lacto-ovo (milk-egg) vegetarians.

### **Hindu Dress**

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

Some Hindus cover their heads - males with either a pagree (turban) or a kishtee (religious cap), and females with an ornhee (scarf). These may be regularly worn head covers, or worn only during special days of significance.

Privacy and modesty are important tenets of Hinduism.

*(This material was developed in consultation with Pandit Suraj Persad, Faith Representative from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.)*

## ISLAM

### The Religion

In Arabic, Islam means peace, purity, obedience, total submission and commitment to the one and only God, and to His laws. Islam, therefore, describes an attribute—the attribute of submission to the will of God.

A Muslim is anyone who has this attribute of “Islam” i.e., anyone who submits to the will of Almighty God. Subsequently, Islam was not founded by anyone. “Muhammadanism” is a misnomer of Islam and offends its very spirit. Muslims are not Muhammadans. They do not worship Muhammad. They worship Almighty God. The word “Allah” is the proper name of God in Arabic. Muhammad (upon whom be God’s peace and blessings) was the name of the Prophet through whom the religion of Islam was revealed. The Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in 571 A.D. The Prophet died in the year 633.

The practices of Islam are called the Five Pillars. They are:

- there is only one God and Muhammed is his prophet
- fasting during the month of Ramadan
- charity
- pilgrimage (hajj)
- daily prayers

(Source: *Multifaith Information Manual*)

### Daily Prayer

#### Beliefs and Practices

Prayer in Islam is required and must be performed at specific times which change throughout the year, depending on the time of sunrise and sunset. Before prayer, Muslims are required to wash their faces, hands, head, and feet. Children are encouraged to begin praying at an early age, and prayer becomes compulsory at puberty. Prayer can be performed individually or in congregation, and men and women pray in separate areas within the same room. Women do not pray during menstruation.

#### The Timing of Prayer and Holy Day Times

Prayer times will vary according to the changing time of sunrise and sunset. Holy days are governed by the lunar calendar and may move by several months from year to year.

#### Prayer Timetable

Muslims pray five times a day:

- |    |              |             |
|----|--------------|-------------|
| 1) | at dawn      | - fajr      |
| 2) | at noon      | - duhr/zuhr |
| 3) | at afternoon | - asr       |
| 4) | at sunset    | - maghrib   |
| 5) | at night     | - isha      |

Each prayer must be performed within a certain period of time, and Muslims can offer each prayer at any time during that period. The period of time for one prayer ends when the period of time for the next prayer begins. The period of time for each prayer varies slightly day to day.

## **Friday Congregational Prayer**

### **Beliefs and Practices**

Friday is the Muslim weekly holy day. Congregational prayer on Fridays is required after puberty. This afternoon service consists of a sermon and prayer. The entire service can take 15-45 minutes. The service is congregational, and its performance in a mosque is preferred. The schedule for Friday Congregational Prayer is consistent throughout the year, but may vary from mosque to mosque.

## **Observations of Islamic Holy Days**

### **Beliefs and Practices**

There are several days in the Islamic calendar with special religious significance, but the major celebrations common to all Muslims are the two Eids. The first Eid (Eid-ul-Fitr) is celebrated the day after the end of the month of Ramadan.

The month of Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic Calendar. The second Eid (Eid-ul-Adha) is celebrated on the tenth day of the twelfth Islamic month. The festivities include congregational prayer and gatherings with family and friends.

## **Pilgrimage (Hajj)**

### **Beliefs and Practices**

Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is compulsory for every Muslim who can afford it and is able to go to Mecca.

## **Ramadan**

### **Fasting During Ramadan**

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

The month of Ramadan lasts for 29 or 30 days, depending on the lunar calendar. During Ramadan, Muslims do not eat or drink from the break of dawn to sunset. Ramadan is a continued period of enhanced commitment to self-restraint and a time to focus on moral conduct. Fasting is required when children reach the age of puberty. However, younger children are encouraged by their parents to participate in the fast so they may become accustomed to the practice. Women and girls who are menstruating are exempt from fasting. Certain persons may be exempt from fasting for health or medical reasons.

#### **Dietary Restrictions**

##### **Beliefs and Practices**

Muslims are careful about the food they consume and how it is prepared. Muslim dietary law prohibits consumption of mind-altering drugs, alcohol, pork, and any pork by-product or derivatives. Standards, called Halal, regulate the slaughter and preparation of meat and poultry.

Some objectionable food items include: pepperoni, pork hot dogs, bacon, gelatin in Jello, candies, and desserts; animal shortening in breads, puddings, crackers, cookies; rennet and pepsin in cheese, etc. Vegetable shortening is acceptable.

## **Islamic Dress**

### **Beliefs and Practices**

Islam prescribes that both men and women behave and dress modestly. Muslims believe that an emphasis on modesty encourages society to value individuals for their wisdom, skills, and contribution to the community, rather than physical characteristics. Although the Islamic dress code is required once a student reaches puberty, many Muslim parents seek to instill modest habits in their children from a much earlier age.

### **Female and Male Dress**

#### **Hijab**

The hijab is commonly referred to as a “veil” or head cover, which characterizes the appearance of many Muslim women. It also refers more generally to the loose-fitting, non-revealing clothes worn by Muslim women. The wearing of hijab is primarily an Islamic requirement and within the Islamic context, is seen as a symbol of identity and modesty. Another way to understand the importance of the hijab is by recognizing that there are different cultural constructions of the concept of “nakedness.” For Muslim women and girls, the amount of their body that they feel comfortable showing in public is governed by a different sense of what it means to be “naked” (i.e., showing even their arms or legs would make them feel naked).

#### **Niqab**

Some women extend the concept of nakedness to include covering their faces (Niqab) Kufi. Males may also choose to wear a head covering (Kufi).

### **Gender Relations**

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

Islam tradition and custom prohibit direct physical contact between men and women who are not related. How this is interpreted will depend on one’s level of religious observance. Formal contact, such as a handshake, may be seen by some as a form of greeting. However, others may include a handshake in the prohibition of physical contact.

*(This information was developed in consultation with Muslim community organizations and The Islamic Council of Jamas, Canada.)*

## JAINISM

### The Religion

Jainism was founded by several Jinas (men who have conquered the endless cycles of life and enlightenment) such as Lord Mahavir. Many more Jinas will exist in the future. Jainism is an ancient religion. Jainism is a system of thought and a way of life.

The basic beliefs of Jainism rest upon four “pillars”:

1. **Ahimsa:** Non-violence, ranging from an act of simple kindness to a comprehensive outlook of universal fraternity.
2. **nekantavada:** Principle of relativity, since truth has many aspects, and all viewpoints are tenable.
3. **parigraha:** Non-acquisition or setting limits to one’s desires so that one does not deny others.
4. **Karma:** Deeds or actions, seen as something which accumulates according to one’s thoughts, activities and which affects ones’ future lives.

(Source: *Multifaith Information Manual*)

### Religious Observances & Practices

#### Dietary Requirements

#### Beliefs and Practices

The Jain motto is “Live and Let Live” by being kind to all. This principle extends to all living beings, including humans, animals, and even plants. Hence, Jains are mostly vegetarians and some are vegan or lacto-ovo vegetarians. Meat, fish, eggs, wine, honey, butter, and cheese (unless rennet-free or of a specific variety) are not accepted. Animal by-products are not used. During the holy days of Paryushan and Daslakshana, vegetables grown under the ground, like potatoes and onions, are also not consumed.

#### Fasting

#### Beliefs and Practices

Practicing Jains may observe fasting on full/half-moon days, as per the lunar calendar, and during the holy days of the Paryushan and Daslakshan Parva.

#### Holy Days & Celebrations

#### Tirthankar Mahavir’s Birthday or Mahavir Janma Kalyanak

Celebrated as an Ahimsa (Non-violence) Day. On this day, the community gathers at the temple, and the life and teachings of Mahavir are told in the form of worship or pooja.

#### Paryushan Parva and Daslakshana Parva

Each holy day consists of eight days of meditation-penance, when special confession-type services are done. The last day is observed as the Samvantsari, the Forgiveness Day. Most Jains fast during these days.

### **Mahavir Nirvan (Salvation) Kalyanak**

Celebrated on the same day as the Diwali (the Festival of Lights).

### **Gnan Panchami**

The Day of Knowledge, observed with pooja (ritualistic offering) to pay homage to Saraswati Devi, the deity of knowledge and learning.

**Maun-agiyaras**, the Day of Silence.

### **Dress Requirements, Religious Attire**

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

It may be noted that Tilak or Chandlo (dot/symbol/design) on the forehead after visiting the temple is retained for the day and should be considered acceptable. It is common to wear pendants with religious symbols and designs.

*(This information was developed in consultation with Mr. Prakash Mody, Jain representative from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.)*

## JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

### The Religion

Charles Taze Russell, along with a small group of Bible students, founded the Jehovah's Witnesses in the late nineteenth century. They were first known as "International Bible Students". In 1879, they began publishing the Bible journal, now called The Watchtower. In 1931, they adopted the name "Jehovah's Witnesses."

Jehovah's Witnesses base their beliefs solely on the principles found in the Bible and view first century Christianity as a model. They believe that in addition to drawing one closer to God, living by Bible principles gives purpose to life, promotes strong family ties and develops productive and honest citizens.

### Observations of Holy Days

#### Beliefs and Practices

Annually, Jehovah's Witnesses commemorate Christ's death. This commemoration is referred to as the Lord's Evening Meal. A simple religious ceremony is held at the Kingdom Hall after sundown. The Lord's Evening Meal occurs in March or April (based on the Jewish lunar calendar).

Jehovah's Witnesses hold weekend assemblies twice each year. In addition, they attend a three or four-day Bible education convention annually.

### Celebrations - Birthdays, Holidays, Functions and Social Events

#### Beliefs and Practice

Jehovah's Witnesses celebrate special events such as weddings, anniversaries, engagements, and/or baby showers. Witness families find enjoyment in spontaneous giving throughout the whole year as expressions of love and affection. They encourage generosity, gift giving and other expressions of appreciation.

#### Holidays:

Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate religious or semi-religious holidays that have non-Christian religious origins or those that promote patriotic exercises.

#### Birthdays:

Jehovah's Witnesses respect the rights of others to celebrate birthdays, but do not share in such celebrations for religious reasons.

### Opening or Closing Exercises

#### Beliefs and Practices

Jehovah's Witnesses respect the country's flag and show this respect by obedience to the laws of the land, yet, they do not share in patriotic exercises. They also do not participate in any activities promoting nationalism. While others stand for the national anthem, Jehovah's Witnesses remain seated and in the case of students, if they are already standing when the anthem is played, they will not necessarily sit

down. In situations where a group is expected to stand and sing, Witnesses may choose to stand out of respect, but not sing.

### **Health Issues**

#### **Beliefs and Practice**

Jehovah's Witnesses actively seek medical care when needed and accept the vast majority of treatments available today, with the exception of blood transfusions. They accept reliable non-blood medical therapies, which are increasingly recognized in the health-care field.

#### **Mature Minors**

Each baptized Witness carries an Advance Medical Directive that provides emergency contact instructions. His/her conscientious decision, outlined in this document, should be respected.

#### **Minors**

Younger children carry an Identity Card which similarly provides parental contact information and directives for emergency situations.

#### **Music/Art/Drama**

Witness youths do not participate in any kind of music and art instruction in connection with religious or patriotic holidays.

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that teaching children about sexuality is the responsibility of parents. Some parents may request that their children be excused from human sexuality classes.

*(This material was developed in consultation with Public Affairs Department, Watch Tower Society of Canada.)*

## JUDAISM

### The Religion

Jews believe that God chose Abraham to introduce the concept of Monotheism, and thus established a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their families, on an individual basis to further spiritual teachings that would be later identified with Jewish theology. The nature of this individual covenant was transformed to one of a national orientation, when the Jewish people collectively received the Torah at Mount Sinai. According to Jewish tradition, this occurred after Moses led the people to freedom from slavery in Egypt.

(Source: *Multifaith Information Manual*)

### Daily Prayer

#### Beliefs and Practices

Jews pray three times daily in the evening, morning, and afternoon. Many Jews try to pray in a minyan, which is a public quorum that enables the saying of specific prayers. Morning prayers may be said from the time the sun comes up until approximately mid-morning. Afternoon prayers are said from shortly after mid-day until the sun sets.

### Bereavement Rituals

#### Beliefs and Practices

Jewish law formally considers the bereaved to be those who have lost any of the following close relatives: father, mother, spouse, son, daughter, brother, sister. During the seven days following the burial, the bereaved sits Shiva in the home of a family member. During this time, the mourner emerges into a new frame of mind, talks about his/her loss, and accepts comfort from friends. The mourner will not be in school, and will welcome visitors to the Shiva house.

For eleven months from the death of a close relative, the bereaved is obligated to recite the Kaddish prayer in memory of the departed. Kaddish is said each morning and evening in a quorum of 10 persons and is part of the daily prayer obligation.

### Preparation for Holy Days and the Sabbath

#### Beliefs and Practices

Jewish holy days start the previous evening at dusk, and end after dark. Preparation for the holy day is seen as an integral part of its observance. During Eastern Standard Time, especially during days when the sun sets early, getting ready for Shabbat (the Sabbath) is greatly complicated by the lack of adequate preparation time. Similarly, the holy day of Passover requires immense advance preparation.

### Shabbat (The Sabbath)

The Jewish Sabbath begins Friday at dusk and concludes Saturday after nightfall each week. Many activities undertaken on this day accentuate the fact that Shabbat is to be devoted to one's spiritual needs.

## **Jewish Holy Days that Require Accommodation**

The Jewish holy days follow the lunar calendar.

### **Rosh Hashanah** (The Jewish New Year)

Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) usually falls in the month of September, but can on occasion fall at the beginning of October. This is a major holy day and most Jewish students and staff will not attend school on these two days.

### **Yom Kippur** (The Day of Atonement)

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year, and is spent fasting and immersed in prayer. Although girls from the age of 12 and boys from the age of 13 are required to fast, children begin at a younger age to practice fasting for part of Yom Kippur.

### **Passover** (The Season of our Freedom)

Passover lasts for eight days and recalls the miraculous exodus of Israel from slavery in Egypt. It is also a commemoration of the birth of the Jewish people as a separate nation distinct from the other nations of the world. All leaven product and by-products are forbidden for the duration of this holiday, and many Jews use special utensils and cookware during Passover.

## **Holy Days That May Require Accommodation**

### **Sukkot** (Tabernacles)

Sukkot comes five days after Yom Kippur and commemorates how Jews lived in temporary dwellings during the 40 years in the desert after leaving Egypt. Jews celebrate this holy day by leaving the comfortable confines of their homes and dwelling in makeshift, temporary structures called Sukkot (Tabernacles).

### **Shimini Atzeret** (The Eighth Day of Solemn Assembly)

### **Simchat Torah** (The Joy of Receiving the Torah)

Simchat Torah celebrates the joy of receiving the Torah from God. On this day, the annual cycle of weekly Torah readings is completed and begun again to symbolize the unending cycle of Torah study.

### **Shavuot** (The Season of the Giving of the Torah)

This holiday commemorates the receiving of the Torah from God at Mt. Sinai.

### **Tisha B'Av**

On this day, Jews remember the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, as well as other tragedies which have befallen the Jewish People. Observant Jews will fast on this day.

### **Other Fast Days**

There are a number of "other" fast days on the Jewish calendar, where one can attend school and be involved in normal activities. These fasts begin at sunrise and end at nightfall.

## **Jewish Holy Days That Don't Require Accommodation**

## **Chanukah** (The Festival of Dedication or Festival of Lights)

This commemoration goes back to the time when the Greek-Syrians, who ruled over the entire Middle East region, sought to prevent the Jews from observing their religion. In a series of battles, led by Judah the Maccabee and his brothers, the Jews emerged victorious and re-established Jewish observance in the land.

## **Purim** (The Feast of Lots)

Purim commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people who lived in the Persian Empire from the anti-Semitic Prime Minister Haman who plotted to annihilate the Jewish population.

## **Yom HaShoah** (Holocaust Remembrance Day)

Yom HaShoah is a time of communal reflection, sadness, and loss as we remember the six million Jews who were murdered by Hitler and the Nazis between 1939 and 1945.

## **Dietary Requirements**

### **Beliefs and Practices**

The Hebrew word “kosher” means that a given food is permitted and acceptable.

All fresh fruits and vegetables are kosher. The Jewish dietary regulations begin when dealing with foods that derive from animals, fish, or fowl.

**Animals:** Kosher is any mammal with split hoofs that chews its cud. Pigs are not kosher.

**Fish/seafood:** Fish that have fins and scales are kosher. Catfish and seafood such as lobster, shrimp, crab, squid are not kosher.

**Amphibian animals:** (frogs, turtles) are also not kosher.

**Fowl:** Chicken, goose, and duck are kosher. Fowl specifically listed in the Bible are not kosher.

**Separation of Dairy and Meat:** It is not permitted to mix milk with meat foods, to cook milk and meat together, or to serve them together at the same time.

Kosher rules are complex as they also involve a specific approach to food preparation and processing.

## **Gender Relations**

### **Beliefs and Practices**

Orthodox Jewish tradition and custom prohibit direct physical contact between men and women who are not related. How this is interpreted will depend on one’s level of religious observance. Formal contact, such as a handshake, may be seen by some as a form of greeting. However, others may include a handshake in the prohibition of physical contact.

## **Dress Requirements**

### **Beliefs and Practices**

Jewish tradition requires men and women to dress modestly. This can be interpreted in different ways, depending on one’s level of observance. For those who are very observant, males will wear only long pants when in public, and females will only wear clothing that doesn’t reveal the shape of their bodies.

Jewish males keep their head covered; however, there is no prescribed covering. Over time, specific head coverings were developed in different parts of the world. Jewish males may choose to wear a specific kind of covering, such as a Kippah (also known as a Yarmulke). Even a baseball cap is acceptable.

*(This information was developed in consultation with Rabbi Ronald Weiss, Faith representative from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.)*

## RASTAFARI

### The Religion

The Rastafari faith and culture as a way of life is deeply entrenched in many world communities. Though the Rastafari religion may seem to be a twentieth century development, some of their practices and principles are as ancient as the way of the Nazarite of Biblical times. The religion's beliefs are based on the Bible and in many African beliefs and traditions. Rastafari embrace the divinity of their ancestors and owe their allegiance to the throne of David, of the line of Solomon, of which throne the 225th King is Haile Sellassie 1st. Rastafari do not believe in nationalism or patriotism. In fact, they claim no attachment to any "ism." Their reverence is to their King and only to their King.

Many Rastafari practices are also embedded within the tradition of Ethiopian Orthodoxy. Historically, African peoples in the New World have traced memories of an African homeland through the trauma of slavery and through ideologies of struggle and resistance. The Rastafari fashion their vision of an ancestral homeland through a complex of ideas and symbols known as Ethiopianism, which has informed concepts of nationhood independence and political uplift since the late sixteenth century. The belief in Ethiopia as a promised land derived from references in the Bible to African peoples as 'Ethiopians,' and it has expressed the political, cultural, and spiritual aspirations of Africans in the Caribbean and North America for over three centuries. From the last quarter of the eighteenth century to the present, Ethiopianism has, at various times, provided for the Rastafari a basis for a common sense of destiny and identification between African peoples in the North American colonies, the Caribbean, Europe, and the African continent.

The Rastafari have a faith and culture based, among other beliefs, on an Afrocentric reading of the Bible, communal values, a strict vegetarian code known as I-tal, use of herbs for medicinal and ritual purposes, and a calendar devoted to the celebration of Ethiopian holy days.

### Holy Days

Many Rastafari celebrations of faith, more particularly for the Nyahbinghi tradition, happen over a period of seven days and seven nights. There are Rastafarians who observe the calendar of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The following is a list of dates that are important to Rastafari internationally:

Ethiopian Christmas	- January 7
Celebrating the Passover	- April 21-25
African Liberation Day	- May 25
Battle of Adowa	- June 11
Haile Selassie's Birthday	- July 23
Emancipation Day	- August 1
Marcus Garvey's Birthday	- August 17
Ethiopian New Year	- September 11
Coronation Day	- November 2

Rastafari also honour and celebrate other holidays acknowledged and celebrated by the African Diaspora.

### Opening and Closing Exercises

#### Beliefs and Practices

Rastafari do not embrace nationalism or patriotism. There may be requests for exemptions from having to sing “O Canada” or “God Save the Queen.”

### **Dietary Requirements**

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

Rastafari of the orthodox Nyahbinghi tradition follow strict vegetarian principles. Their diet is called “I-tal.” I-tal food is special food that never touches chemicals or that is natural and not from cans. The food is cooked, but served in the rawest form possible; without salts, preservatives, or condiments. They do not eat any form of meat, fish, or eggs, nor their by-products. Those Rastafari who do eat meat do not eat pork (scavengers of the earth) or derivatives. Fish is I-tal food, but lobster, crabs, and shrimp (scavengers of the sea) are not allowed. The fish allowed is small (no more than 12 inches). Tea and herbal drinks are permitted. Coffee, milk, soft drinks, and liquor are not allowed and considered unnatural. Rastafari require a supportive and spiritually comfortable environment for eating.

### **Dress**

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

Rastafari focus on modesty and cleanliness as opposed to clothing for fashion. Choices of adornment show a respect for that which is natural, simple, and practical. The colours red, gold, and green, representing the rainbow land of Ethiopia and throne of God from the Scriptures Ezekiel Ch. 1, are important symbolic colours.

Rastafari grow their hair untouched and uncut as a vow or covenant with their creator. Children and adults cannot cut their hair. The vow is similar to the Nazarite vow made by the ancient biblical prophets. “They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in the flesh” Bible: Leviticus 21:5. Hair is never cut nor combed (worn in ‘dreadlocks’). Facial hair is never cut either. Head covering is necessary to protect the locks. A head covering may include a cloth wrap, knitted tams or shawls, etc.

Rastafari do not object to their children wearing a school-mandated uniform as long as the uniform in its physical and or metaphysical functioning does not offend or impinge on the rights and principles of the faith.

Rastafari should be permitted the right to cultural norms of formality: e.g., the right to wear an African outfit in lieu of a suit and tie to formal occasions. Small tokens, emblems, buttons, badges, and shawls depicting symbolic colours of relevance to the culture should be allowed to be worn.

*(This information was developed in consultation with Ras Ishaka Williams.)*

## SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

### **The Religion**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown from a small group of individuals from the New England States of the U.S., who carefully studied the Bible in the mid-1800 based on the teachings of William Miller, to a worldwide community of 11 million members. In 1860, at Battle Creek, Michigan, the Adventists chose the name Seventh-day Adventists and in 1863 formally organized a church body.

Adventists base their faith in God as revealed through Jesus Christ and as shown through the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit. They believe the Bible is the sole rule of faith and practice, and that it is the unequivocal word of God. Seventh-day Adventists observe the Sabbath on Saturday as Jesus observed the seventh-day Sabbath while on earth. They demonstrate their belief and commitment to their faith through baptism (being immersed in water), following the example of Jesus.

The writings of Ellen G. White, one of the Church's founders, are an aid to Bible interpretation. She also prescribed a dietary regimen of vegetarianism and abstention from tobacco and alcohol.

(Source: *Multifaith Information Manual and Seventh-Day Adventist Web site: www.adventist.org*)

### **Observation of the Sabbath**

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

The Sabbath is a 24-hour unit of time that begins at sunset on Friday and concludes the following evening.

#### **Dietary Considerations**

Seventh-day Adventists believe that a balanced vegetarian diet provides the healthiest lifestyle. Only fresh foods identified as "clean" in scriptures may be used.

(*This information was developed in consultation with Giuseppe De Meo, Faith representative from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.*)

## SIKHISM

### The Religion

The founder of the Sikh religion was Guru Nanak, born in 1469. He preached a message of love and understanding. Guru Nanak passed on leadership of this new religion to nine successive Gurus. The final living Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, died in 1708.

During his lifetime, Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa order's (meaning The Pure') soldier-saints. The Khalsa uphold the highest Sikh virtues of commitment, dedication, and social consciousness. The Khalsa are men and women who have undergone the Sikh baptism ceremony, strictly follow the Sikh code of Conduct and Conventions, and wear the prescribed five physical articles of the faith.

Sikhism does not have priests; they were abolished by Guru Gobind Singh. Sikhs only have custodians of the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book). Any Sikh is free to read the Guru Granth Sahib in the Gurdwara (a Sikh temple) or in their home. People of all religions are welcome to the Gurdwara. A free community kitchen can be found at every Gurdwara, which serves meals to all people of all faiths.

### Prayer and Worship

#### Beliefs and Practices

Sikhs worship three times a day—early in the morning and twice at night. The morning prayer takes about 50 minutes, has three segments, and is usually said just before dawn or breakfast. The evening prayer is said just before supper and takes about 20 minutes. The third prayer of the day takes about 5 minutes and is offered just before bedtime. Whenever possible, it is best to say the morning and evening prayers in congregation. The third prayer can be done individually.

### Observations of Holy Days

#### Beliefs and Practices

Sikhs meet in congregation for prayer and a common meal on holy days. Sikhs observe all of their holy days. However, in Canada most Sikhs will be absent from school or work on the following days:

#### Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh

Guru Gobind Singh Ji was the tenth of the living Gurus of the Sikhs. He lived from 1666 to 1708. Divine spiritual light in human form was carried from the first Guru through nine successive Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth and last living Guru. After his death, Guruship was passed on to the eternal Guru, Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book.

#### Vaisakhi Day

This day celebrates the founding of the Khalsa order (Sikh religion) in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Many Sikhs choose to be baptized into the Khalsa Panth on this day. On this day, male Khalsa Sikhs are named Singh (lion), and female Khalsa Sikhs are named Kaur (princess). It is the most important holy day of the year for Sikhs.

### **Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji**

This holy day honours the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the Sikh faith, who lived from 1469 to 1539.

(Some Sikhs will be absent from school or work on the following days)

### **Maghi**

Maghi commemorates the battle fought on behalf of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, in which 40 Sikhs, led by a woman devotee, Mai Bhago, died.

### **Hola Mohalla**

This holy day takes place at the end of winter and welcomes the new season with sports and athletic activities.

### **Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji**

On this holy day, Sikhs remember those who have suffered for their faith and the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji who sacrificed his life for religious expression. Guru Arjan Dev Ji built the Golden Temple at Amristar and compiled the Adi Granth, the Sikh scriptures.

### **Parkash**

Parkash celebrates the introduction of the Adi Granth to the Golden Temple.

### **Investiture of Guru Granth Sahib (Eternal)**

This holy day celebrates the passing on of the guruship from 10 living gurus to the eternal Guru, Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book.

### **Bandi Chhor Divas**

This holy day celebrates the release of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind Ji, and 52 other religious prisoners of various faiths from jail, and the Guru's subsequent journey to the holy city of Amritsar. This day coincides with the Hindu festival of Divalhi.

### **Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji**

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji sacrificed his life for freedom of religious expression and in the protest against forced conversion of Hindus to another faith.

### **Dress Requirements, Religious Attire**

It is hoped that schools breed an atmosphere of tolerance and ensure that students are not teased or harassed due to this visible sign of their beliefs. Sikh students should feel supported, and there should be a climate of acceptance of their dress. The student body should be aware of the consequences of harassing students because of their religious dress.

## Beliefs and Practices

Men and women who have been initiated (baptized) into the Khalsa order (baptized Sikhs) uphold the five articles of faith, commonly referred to as the 5 K's:

Kesh  
Kangha  
Kirpan  
Kara  
Kash.

Sikhs wear the five K's as symbols of their freedom, commitment, and identity. Initiation into Khalsa is a very personal decision and can happen at any age depending on the individual's readiness and knowledge of the faith. The family plays an important part in the decision and family members may be initiated at different ages.

1. **Kesh** (uncut hair) is the uncut hair of a Sikh and is a symbol of spirituality, commitment to life, and obedience to God's will. Sikhs do not cut their hair throughout their lives. Men's hair is always protected by a turban, until they are old enough to be able to wear a turban. The turban itself is a five to seven-metre piece of cotton cloth.
2. **Kangha** (wooden comb) is a symbol of physical cleanliness, orderliness, discipline, and commitment to life. A Sikh is required to keep uncut hair clean and to comb it twice a day. The kangha is tied into the knot of hair and is concealed in the turban or patka.
3. **Kirpan** (ceremonial small sword, approximately six to seven inches) is a symbol of courage, self-sacrifice, defense of the weak and righteousness. Wearing the kirpan is a requirement of being a Khalsa Sikh. This ceremonial knife symbolizes each individual's duty towards other human beings, particularly the poor and oppressed, and is worn on the person. This is not a weapon, and strict rules prohibit its use as such. It is never to be removed from its sheath. For safety reasons, two or three clasps hold the kirpan securely in the sheath. Only a baptized Khalsa Sikh is required to wear a kirpan. (In a school setting the kirpan is required to be worn sheathed under clothing.)
4. **Kara** (steel bracelet worn on right wrist) is a symbol of commitment to God and eternity. The bracelet has no beginning or end, just as God has no beginning or end.
5. **Kach** (specially designed undergarment) is a symbol of chastity and modesty.

*(This information was developed in consultation with Harsharan Singh, Faith representative from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.)*

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST

### Introduction

Christian Science dates to the 1860s in Massachusetts, USA, when Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) began to teach and practice successfully spiritual healing, based on her intensive study of the Bible and Jesus' healing ministry. In *Rudimental Divine Science*, she defined Christian Science as: "The law of God, the law of good, interpreting and demonstrating the divine Principle and rule of universal harmony." In 1875, she published the basic teachings of Christian Science in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. In 1879, she founded the First Church of Christ, Scientist.

Since then, 60,000 testimonies of healing, experienced by adherents and others, have been published in the Church's periodicals. These have been of virtually every illness, many diagnosed as incurable or terminal. Christian Science also teaches the healing of moral problems and addictions.

The following is a brief exposition of the important points, or religious tenets, of Christian Science:

1. As adherents of Truth, we take the inspired Word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal Life.
2. We acknowledge and adore one supreme and infinite God. We acknowledge His Son, one Christ; the Holy Ghost or divine Comforter; and man in God's image and likeness.
3. We acknowledge God's forgiveness of sin in the destruction of sin and the spiritual understanding that casts out evil as unreal. However, the belief in sin is punished so long as the belief lasts.
4. We acknowledge Jesus' atonement as the evidence of divine, efficacious Love, unfolding man's unity with God through Christ Jesus the Way shower; and we acknowledge that man is saved through Christ, through Truth, Life, and Love as demonstrated by the Galilean Prophet in healing the sick and overcoming sin and death.
5. We acknowledge that the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection served to uplift faith to understand eternal Life, even the allness of Soul, Spirit, and the nothingness of matter.
6. And we solemnly promise to watch, and pray for that Mind to be in us which was also in Christ Jesus; to do unto others as we would have them do unto us; and to be merciful, just and pure."

*(Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, page 496)*

### Health Care/Immunizations

#### Beliefs and Practices

While spiritual healing is central to the practice of Christian Science, adherents comply with all federal and provincial laws governing quarantine, the reporting of contagious disease, and mandated vaccinations. In addition, Christian Science parents recognize that teachers, and especially principals, must "give assiduous attention to the health and comfort of the pupils" [Education Act, s. 265(j)]. Within the framework of Canadian and Ontarian law, Christian Science parents make health care decisions regarding their children, with no intervention from the Church."

*(This material was developed in consultation with Lyle Young, Christian Science Committee on Publication for Ontario, and representative of The Ontario Congregations of the Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Science) on The Ontario MultiMate Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.)*

## Religious Holy Days

This Calendar of Religious Holy Days has been adapted from The Ontario Public Service Holy Days Policy, which was developed through consultation with leaders and representatives of religions that complied with Section 20 of the Marriage Act. **It should only be used as a general guide for information purposes.** While the names of the observances will remain the same, the dates for solar, lunar and other calendars will change from year to year.

The College/Schools is/are reminded to follow collective agreements for granting employees' requests for leave.

## ABORIGINAL & FIRST NATIONS

### Aboriginal & First Nations

National Day of Solidarity for Aboriginal People (June 21).

Note: Each band may have unique spiritual observances which are not "Religious Holidays," but may require accommodation.

### BAHÁ'Í

#### Baha'i

Baha'i New Year "Nauru"  
 First Day of the Festival of Ridvan  
 Ninth Day of the Festival of Ridvan  
 Twelfth Day of the Festival of Ridvan  
 The Declaration of the Bab  
 The Ascension of Baha'u'llah  
 The Martyrdom of the Bab  
 The Birth of the Bab  
 The Birth of Baha'u'llah

### BUDDHISM

#### Buddhism (Tibetan)

Tibetan's New Year  
 Day of Offering (first full moon day of Tibetan New Year)  
 The Buddha's Enlightenment (Saga Dawa)  
 His Holiness Dali Lama's Birthday  
 Chokor Korway Ducchen (1<sup>st</sup> Turning of the wheel of Dharma)

#### Buddhist (Tengye Ling Tibetan)

Tibetan's New Year (Losar)  
 Day of Miracles  
 Buddha's Birth (Wesak)  
 Buddha's Death (Parinivana)  
 Buddha's Enlightenment (Mahayana)  
 His Holiness the 14th Dali Lama's Birthday  
 Buddha's Descent from Tushita Heaven

**Buddhist (Hinayana)**

Chinese New Year  
Spring Ohigon  
Kwan Yan Day  
Saka New Year  
Buddha's Birth (Wesak)  
Dharma Day (Termination of Rainy Observances)  
Wassana (Full Moon Day)  
Ullambana (Mahayana)  
Fall Ohigon  
Parinirvana  
Founder's Day  
Kathina (Theravada)  
Mert Shamp Day

**Buddhist (Mahayana)**

Note: In the Western world, festivals are generally celebrated on the Sunday nearest to the actual date.

Chinese New Year Lunar New Budha's Enlightenment  
Buddha's Enlightenment (Mahayana)  
Budha's Birthday (Wesak) (Mahayana)  
Budha's Birthday (Therevadin)

**CHRISTIANITY****Anglican**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Antiochian Orthodox Christian**

Good Friday  
Easter Sunday  
Pentecost  
Christmas

**Apostolic Church in Canada**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays.

**Armenian Church**

Christmas  
Good Friday  
Easter

Note: Remaining religious observances follow Gregorian/Western calendar.

**Associated Gospel**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Baptist**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox**

Christmas  
Epiphany  
Annunciation  
Good Friday  
Easter  
Ascension  
Dormition

**Catholic: Roman Catholic**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Catholic: Polish**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Catholic: Ukrainian Catholic** (The Ukrainian Catholic Church uses two calendars – Gregorian (new) and Julian (old). Ukrainian Catholic Followers may follow either calendar. However, the accepted norm is that a person follows one calendar at one time – not both.

Christmas (Nativity)  
Epiphany (Theophany)  
Annunciation  
Good Friday  
Easter (Resurrection)  
Ascension  
Pentecost  
Sts. Peter & Paul  
Dormition

**Christ of Latter Day Saints**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Christadelphian**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Christian and Missionary Alliance**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Christian Assembly Of Taiwan**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond statutory holidays.

**Christian Reformed Church in North America**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

Some members observe Ascension Day Eve services.

**Church of Scientology**

Birthday of Founder, L. Ron Hubbard (Date same every year)

**Church of the Nazarene**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Church of United Brethren Or Christ**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Christian Churches**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Egyptian (Coptic) Orthodox**

Christmas  
Baptism of Christ  
Good Friday  
Easter  
St. Mark's Feast (Patron Saint)  
Pentecost  
Coptic New Year

**Ethiopian Orthodox**

Ethiopian Christmas  
Epiphany  
Feast of Cana of Galilee  
Good Friday

Easter  
Ethiopian New Year  
Founding of the True Cross

**Evangelical Baptist**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays. However, churches elect members to attend Fellowship Convention Day (first Wednesday in November) and Ontario Fellowship Day (first Tuesday in May) – members, if elected to attend, may request time off.

**Evangelical Fellowship**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Evangelical Lutheran**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Greek Orthodox**

Note: Some fellow Gregorian (Western) Calendar; some members may choose after Easter Julian (Eastern) Calendar.

Epiphany Day  
Annunciation  
Orthodox Good Friday  
Orthodox Easter  
Ascension Day (6th Thursday after Easter)  
Pentecost  
Dormition  
Holy Cross Day  
Christmas

**Jehovah's Witnesses**

Note: Members participate in the Annual District International Assembly (3-4 days) and two annual Circuit Assemblies. Date is scheduled locally. While these are not religious holidays, accommodation would be required.

Memorial of Christ's death (follows the Jewish Calendar- [Nisan 14th] April 17, 1992)

**Lutheran**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Macedonian Orthodox**

Christmas Day  
Good Friday  
Easter Sunday  
Easter Monday  
Pentecost Holy Trinity  
Theophany – Baptism of our Lord  
St. Clement of Oris-Patron Day

**Mennonite**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Methodist**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Missionary Church**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays

**New Dawn**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays

**Moravian Church**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Pentecostal**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**People's Church**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Presbyterian**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

Holy Christmas  
Good Friday  
Easter Sunday (Palm Sunday)  
Easter

**Quakers**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Reform Church of Canada**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Russian Orthodox Church of America**

Christmas  
Epiphany Day  
Meeting of Our Lord  
Annunciation  
Orthodox Good Friday  
Orthodox Easter  
Orthodox Easter Monday  
Ascension Day  
Pentecost  
Transfiguration  
Dormition  
Nativity of the Mother of God  
Holy Cross Day  
Presentation of the Virgin

**Salvation Army**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Serbian Orthodox**

Christmas Eve  
Christmas  
Serbian New Year  
Epiphany  
Good Friday  
Easter Sunday (Pascha)  
Easter Monday  
Pentecost

**Seventh-Day Adventists**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Spiritualist Church of Canada**

Information not available at time of publication.

**Ukrainian Orthodox**

Christmas  
New Year  
Feast of Epiphany  
Good Friday

Easter Monday

**Unitarian**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**United Church**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Wesleyan**

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

**Worldwide Church of God**

- Lord's Supper
- First Day of Unleavened Bread
- celebration of Jesus Resurrection
- Last Day of Unleavened Bread
- Day of Pentecost
- Feast of Trumpets
- Day of Atonement
- First Day of the Festival of Tabernacles
- Last Day of the Festival
- Celebration of Jesus' Birth

**HINDUISM**

**Hindu**

Note: Specific dates may vary from year to year, based on the solar or lunar calendars. Dates can also vary depending on the time differential between Canada and India.

- Putrada Ekadashi
- Lohri (Punjab)
- Makara Sankranti and Thai Pongal
- Vasanta Panchami or
- Saraswati Puja (N. India)
- Mahashivaratri (appearance of Bagavan Shiva)
- Rama Navami
- Vaisahki (Tamil New Year)
- Guru Purnima
- Raksha Bandham (N. India)
- Sri Krishna Jayanti Janmasthanami
- Vinayaka Chaturthi for Lord Ganesha
- Durga Puja (Mahastami)
- Vijaya Dasami/Dassehra
- Karva Chouth
- Diwali/Kali Puja

**ISLAM**

Note: Muslim holidays are based on Lunar Calendar, and observances may vary by a day, depending on the community.

**Islam:**

- Jum'at-ul-Wida (the last Friday of the month)
- Ahmadiyya Movement of Ramadan 1420 al-Hijri)
- Every Friday (12:15-2:00 – congregational prayers sacrifices)
- Eid-ul-Fitr (one day at the end of the month of fasting – Ramadan)

Eid-ul-Adha (Festival of Sacrifices)  
Next Day of the Pilgrimage – Hajj)  
Jum'at-ul-Wida (the last Friday of the month of Ramadan 1421 al-Hijri)  
Eid-ul-Fitr (one day at the end of the month of fasting – Ramadan)

**Islam: Dawoodi**

Bohara  
Eid-ul-Fitr (1st day after Ramadan)  
Day of Hajj (Day at Arafat)  
Eid-ul-Adha  
First of Muharram (New Year)  
Ashura  
Mawlid-un-Nabi  
Mi'raj al-Naby  
Nisf Sha'ban  
First of Ramadan  
Lailat-ul-Qadr  
Jum'at-ul-Wida (Akhar Juma)

**Islam: Shia**

Laylat-ul-Qadr  
Jum'at-ul-Wida  
Eid-ul-Fitr (1st day after Ramadan)  
Day of Hajj (Day at Arafat)  
Eid-ul-Adha  
Eid-e-Ghadir  
First of Muharram (New Year's Day)  
Ashura  
Mawlid-un-Nabi  
Mawlid Iman Zaman

**Islam: Sunni**

Eid-ul-Fitr (one day-at the end of Ramadan)  
Eid-ul-Adha (one day and accommodation or those taking the pilgrimage to Mecca)  
Eid-ul-Fitr (one day-at the end of Ramadan)

**Islam: Ismaili**

Eid-e-Navroz  
Eid-ul-Adha  
Eid-e-Milad  
Imamat-Birth of Ima (July 11, unless it falls within month of mourning, then may vary)  
Laylat-ul-Qadr  
Eid-ul-Fitr (1st after Ramadan)

**JAINISM**

**Jain Society of Toronto**

Mahavira Jayanti  
Akshaya Tritiya  
Paryushana Parve (Shvetambara Sect-8 days)  
Samvatsari & Daslakshana (Digambara sect)  
Ananta Chaturdasi  
Ksamavani (Forgiveness Day)  
Mahavira Nirvana-Diwali  
Gnan Panchmi (Day of Knowledge)  
Lokashah Jayanti  
Maun Ajjiaras

## JUDAISM

### Judaism: Conservative

Note: Sabbath starts Friday sundown. All holy days start sundown the night preceding the holiday.  
Pesach/Passover (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Days)

### WICCA

Shavuot/Pentecost (2 days)  
Rosh Hashanah/New Year (2 days)  
Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (1 day)  
Succot (Tabernacles)

### Judaism: Orthodox

Pach/Passover (1st, 2nd, 7th, & 8th Days)  
Shavuot/Pentecost (2 days)  
Rosh Hashanah/New Year (2 days)  
Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (1 day)  
Succot  
Simchat Torah

### Judaism Reform

Note: Sabbath starts Friday sundown. All holy days start sundown the night preceding the holiday.

Pesach/Passover (1st, 2nd, 7th, & 8th Days)  
Rosh Hashanah/New Year (2 days)  
Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (1 day)  
Succot  
Simchat Torah  
Hanukkah

## SIKHISM

### Sikh

Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh  
Maghi  
Hola Mohalla  
Baisakhi  
Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev  
Parkash  
Diwali  
Installation of Holy Scriptures as Guru  
Granth Sahib  
Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev  
Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur

## WICCA

Note: Evening observances commence at sundown. Solstic observances commence at sunrise. Dates are the same every year.

Imbolic  
Spring (Vernal) Equinox  
Beltain (May Eve & May Day)  
Summer Solstice  
Lamas  
Autumnal Equinox  
Samhain

Yuel (Winter Solstice)

## ZOROASTRIAN

Note: Dates will change as Zoroastrians follow a 365-day calendar leap-year day. (F) Fasli-Seas0n  
(S) Shenshahi-Royal.

Jashan-e-Sadeh (F)  
Jamshidi Norooz (New Year) (F&S)  
Birthday of Prophet Asho Zarthost's (F)  
Farvardegan (F)  
Asho Zarathost's Death Anniversary (S)  
Norooz (S)  
Farvardian (S)  
Mahergan (F)  
Asho Zarathost's Death Anniversary (F)

