

4

SECTION 4

Religious Holy Days

Please note that, for the purpose of this document, we are utilizing the following definition of religion or creed and interpreting it as “religious creed” or “religion.” (See [Creed](#) section of this document for additional information.)

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 condition to believe in a creed.

The following listing of religious holy days has been adapted from and compiled using a variety of resources, including, but not limited to

- York Region District School Board’s Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances
- Anti-Defamation League’s Calendar of Observances
- Ontario Public Service’s 2015 List of Religious Holy Days
- Toronto District School Board’s 2014–2015 Days of Significance

The purpose of this listing of religious holy days is to provide an overview and general guide to the observances of members of the diverse school communities. It is provided for information only. Dates are not provided, as while the names of the observances will remain the same, the dates for solar, luna, and other calendars will change from year to year.

Diversity of Religious Calendars

Within Christianity there are two primary calendar systems used today by different denominations. These are the **Julian** calendar and the **Gregorian** calendar.

The Julian Calendar was developed in Rome around 50 BCE and became widespread throughout the Roman Empire and is still used by some Christian groups/denominations. Unfortunately, the Julian calendar was too long by about 11 minutes and 14 seconds each year, or one day every 128 years.

The Gregorian calendar is based on the Julian calendar and was introduced by Pope Gregory to deal with the problems associated with the old Julian calendar. Although the Gregorian calendar is often associated with the Catholic Church and the papacy, it has been adopted, as a matter of convenience, by many secular and non-Christian countries although some countries use other

calendars. The Gregorian calendar is the most widespread civil calendar and has become the de facto international standard.

Currently the Julian calendar is 13 days later than the Gregorian calendar.

While many Christian groups share common holy or special days, those using the Julian or other calendars for religious purposes, such as the Armenian, Coptic, or Ethiopian calendars, will have holy days that fall on different dates of the civil calendar and may require accommodation.

OTHER CALENDARS USED BY DIFFERENT FAITH GROUPS THROUGHOUT THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

- There are a number of **Buddhist** calendars which vary according to region.
- The **Jewish** calendar is used by Jews worldwide for religious and cultural affairs. It is based on an estimate of the start of human civilization which they believe began with the exit of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden during 3761 BCE.
- The **Islamic** calendar is based upon 622 CE, the year of the Hegira, when the Prophet Muhammad traveled from Mecca to Medina. It is a lunar calendar consisting of 12 lunar months in a year of 354 or 355 days. It is used by Muslims worldwide for religious and cultural affairs.
- The various **Hindu** calendars are used in the Indian Sub-Continent. Some of the more prominent national and regional Hindu calendars include Nepali, Punjabi, Bengali, Odia, Malayalam, Kannada panchanga, Tulu, Tamil, Vikrama Samvat, and Shalivahana calendars.
- The **Sikh** calendar is based on the start of the Khalsa Era. Their new year begins on April 13 or 14 of the Gregorian calendar.
- The **Baha'i** calendar is used by Bahá's worldwide. The beginning of the Baha'i Era occurred in 1260 AH which is 1844 CE.
- Various **Zoroastrian** calendars have evolved over time and are in use. There are currently three main calendars in use: Fasli, Shahanshahi, and Qadimi.

Note: For additional and future dates for holidays and holy days, please refer to the interfaith calendar at www.interfaith-calendar.org/ or BBC's Interfaith calendar at www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/, or the Anti-Defamation League's Calendar of Observances at www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/calendar-of-observances.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) communities are diverse and each band or group may have unique cultural or spiritual observances which may not be religious holidays, but may require accommodation.

- June 21 is the National Day of Solidarity for Indigenous Peoples.
- Spring, summer, fall, and winter change of season ceremonies may be celebrated by many FNMI peoples.

Bahá'í

The dates are the same every year.

- Baha'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 Báb
- The ascension of the Baha'ú'llah
- The martyrdom of the Báb
- The Birth of the Báb
- The Birth of Baha'ú'llah

Buddhism

BUDDHIST (MAHAYANA)

- Buddha's Enlightenment (Mahayana)
- Lunar New Year (World Peace Prayer Service/Chinese New Year))
- Buddha's Parinirvana/Buddha's Great Renunciation
- Buddha's Birthday (Wesak)
- Ullambana (Ancestor's Day)

BUDDHIST (RIWOICHE TIBETAN)

- Tibetan New Year (Losar)
- Day of Offering (1st full moon day of the Tibetan New Year)
- Tibetan's Buddha's Birth (Wesak)
- The Buddha's Enlightenment (Saka Dawa)
- Tibetan's Buddha's Death (Pari Nirvana)
- His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Birthday
- Choe-kor Due-chen (1st turning of the wheel of Dharma)
- Lhabab Duche

BUDDHIST (THERAVADA)

- Temple Day (Canada)
- Shaka Day (New Year's Day)
- Vesak/Buddha Day, Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment, and Demise Anniversary (Full Moon Day)
- Sangha Day (Magha Puja Day or Fourfold Assembly Day)
- Asalha Puja/Dhamma Day
- Observance Day (Uposatha)
- Vassa (beginning of Rains Retreat) (Full Moon Day)
- Conclusion of the Vassa (End of Rains Retreat) (Full Moon Day)

BUDDHIST (TIBETAN/TENGYE LING)

- Tibetan New Year (Losar)
- Day of Miracles
- Buddha's Enlightenment (Saka Dawa) Wesak
- His Holiness The Dalai Lama's Birthday
- Universal Prayer Day
- Shakyamuni Buddha's First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma
- Buddha's Descent from the Celestial Realm
- Festival of Lights

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

Christianity

The list of religious holy days that follows focuses on the most common and key days. However, there may be additional religious holy days which are recognized and commemorated by specific faith groups. For example, Easter Monday is celebrated by many Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christian denominations.

In Eastern Orthodox Churches and those Eastern Catholic Churches which follow the Byzantine Rite, Easter Monday is known as Bright Monday or Renewal Monday.

Easter Monday is an official holiday in about 122 countries throughout the world. Although it is not a national statutory holiday in Canada, it is a provincial statutory holiday in Quebec.

Denominations that **usually do not require accommodations** for religious holy or special days beyond the existing statutory holidays in Canada include:

- Anglican
- Apostolic Church
- Associated Gospel
- Baptist
- Christadelphian
- Christian Churches (includes Disciples of Christ and Christian Church)
- Christian and Missionary Alliance
- Christian Assembly of Taiwan
- Christian Reformed Church of North America
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon Church)
- Church of Scientology
- Church of The Nazarene
- Church of United Brethren in Christ
- Churches of Christ (includes Disciples of Christ and Christian Church)
- Community of Christ (formerly Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints)
- Evangelical Fellowship
- Grace Communion International (formerly The Worldwide Church of God)
- Lutheran
- Mennonite
- Methodist Churches
- Missionary Church
- New Apostolic

- New Dawn Moravian Church
- Pentecostal
- Polish Catholic
- Presbyterian
- Quakers
- Reform Church Of Canada
- Roman Catholic
- Salvation Army
- Seventh-Day Adventist
- United Church
- Wesleyan

Denominations that **usually require accommodations** for some religious holy or special days because of a use of a different calendar or other factors which may require absence from school/work beyond the existing statutory holidays in Canada include:

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN (REVISED JULIAN CALENDAR)

- Theophany
- Annunciation
- Good Friday
- Easter Sunday
- Pentecost
- Christmas

ARMENIAN HOLY APOSTOLIC CHURCH IN CANADA (REVISED JULIAN CALENDAR)

- Christmas
- Presentation of the Lord
- Maundy Thursday
- Good Friday
- Easter
- Martyr's Day

BELARUSIAN AUTOCEPHALOUS ORTHODOX (REVISED JULIAN CALENDAR)

- Christmas
- Epiphany
- Annunciation
- Good Friday
- Easter
- St. Ephrasinia
- Ascension
- Dormition
- St. Nicholas

CATHOLIC

Ukrainian Catholic

Byzantine (Eastern Rite) Catholic churches use the **Julian Calendar** to calculate their feast days. Beginning in 1924 the Patriarchate of Constantinople made an adjustment to their liturgical year to bring the fixed cycle in conformity to the modern Gregorian Calendar. The Paschal cycle, however, continued to be calculated according to the Julian Calendar. This composite calendar is known as the **Revised Julian Calendar**. Constantinople's example was followed by the Church of Greece as well as a number of other autocephalous churches. Today, some churches continue to follow the Julian Calendar while others follow the Revised Julian Calendar.

Ukrainian Catholic Churches in Canada could follow either calendar depending on the parish.

- Christmas (nativity)
- Epiphany (theophany)
- Annunciation
- Good Friday
- Easter (resurrection)
- Ascension (40 days after Easter, always on a Thursday)
- Pentecost
- Sts. Peter and Paul
- Dormition

CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY

- Birthday of Founder, L. Ron Hubbard

EGYPTIAN (COPTIC) ORTHODOX (COPTIC CALENDAR)

- Christmas
- Baptism of Christ
- Good Friday
- Easter Eve
- Easter
- St. Mark's Feast (Patron Saint)
- Entry of our Lord into Egypt
- Ascension
- Pentecost
- Apostles' Feast
- Assumption of Holy Virgin Mary
- Coptic New Year

ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO (ETHIOPIAN CALENDAR)

- Ethiopian Christmas
- Epiphany
- Feast of Cana of Galilee
- Good Friday
- Easter
- Ethiopian New Year
- Founding of the True Cross

EVANGELICAL BAPTIST

There are no religious holidays requiring absence from school/work beyond the existing statutory holidays in Canada. Churches do, however, elect members to attend Fellowship Convention Day (first Wednesday in November) and Manitoba Fellowship Day (first Tuesday in May). Members, if elected to attend, may request time off.

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN

There are no religious holidays requiring absence from school/work beyond the existing statutory holidays in Canada. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day, Reformation Day, and All Saints' Day.

GREEK ORTHODOX (REVISED JULIAN CALENDAR)

Note: The dates provided are based on the Gregorian calendar; some members may choose to follow the Julian calendar.

- Epiphany Day
- Annunciation
- Orthodox Good Friday
- Orthodox Easter
- Ascension Day
- Pentecost
- Monday of the Holy Spirit
- Transfiguration of Our Saviour
- Dormition of the Virgin Mary
- Holy Cross Day
- Christmas

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Note: Members participate in the annual district international assembly for three or four days as well as two annual circuit assemblies. Dates are scheduled locally. While these are not religious holidays, they require accommodation.

- Memorial of Christ's death (follows the Jewish calendar)

MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX (JULIAN CALENDAR)

- New Year
- Orthodox Christmas Day
- Theophany—Baptism of Our Lord
- Good Friday
- Easter Sunday
- Easter Monday
- Pentecost Holy Trinity
- Macedonian Day “Ilinden”
- Theophany (Baptism of Our Lord)
- St. Clements of Oris (Patron Day)

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (JULIAN CALENDAR)

- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Epiphany Day
- Meeting of Our Lord
- Annunciation
- Palm Sunday
- Orthodox Good Friday
- Orthodox Easter
- Orthodox Easter Monday
- Ascension Day
- Pentecost
- St. Apostles or Peter and Paul Day
- Transfiguration
- Dormition
- Nativity of the Mother of God
- Holy Cross Day
- Presentation of the Holy Virgin
- Arch Angel Michael (St. Michael Day)
- Entry of the Holy Virgin into the Temple
- St. Nicholas

SERBIAN ORTHODOX (JULIAN CALENDAR)

Slava (Patron Saint Day): one day per year; a religious observance between priest and parishioners; most common are St. John the Baptist, St. George, St. Michael Archangel, and St. Nicholas.

- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Serbian New Year's Eve
- Epiphany
- St. Sava
- Good Friday
- Easter Sunday (Pascha)
- Easter Monday
- Pentecost

SPIRITUALIST CHURCH OF CANADA

Information unavailable at time of publication.

UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX (JULIAN CALENDAR)

- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- New Year
- Feast of Epiphany/Eve
- Epiphany Day
- Palm Sunday
- Annunciation Mother of God (St. Mary)
- Good Friday
- Easter Sunday
- Easter Monday
- Pentecost
- Transfiguration of the Lord
- Dormition Mother of God

UNITARIAN AS DEFINED BY THE INDIVIDUAL OR FAMILY

Unitarian Universal supports the individual's right to choose their own spiritual truth. These dates should be confirmed in September of each year (see <http://cuc.ca/>).

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.

- Lohri (Punjab)
- Makara Sankranti and Thai Pongal
- Vasanta Panchami or Saraswati Puja (North India)
- Maha Shivaratri (Lord Shiva)
- Holi
- Rama Navarni
- Hanuman Jayanti
- Guru Purnima

- Raksha Bandham (North India)
- Sri Krishna Janam—Asthmi
- Vinaayak Chaturthi for Lord Ganesha
- Durga Puja (Mahastmi)
- Vitaya Dasami/Dassera
- Karva Chouth
- Diwali/Lakshmi Puja

Humanist Church, Canadian Humanist Association

HUMANISM

None

Islam

Note: Muslim holidays based on Lunar Calendar and observances may vary by a day before or after from dates given, depending on the community.

ISLAM: AHMADIYYA MUSLIM COMMUNITY

- Every Friday afternoon—congregational prayers
- Jumatul Wida (the last Friday in the month of Ramadan)
- Eid-ul-Fitr (conclusion of the month of Fasting—Ramadan)
- Eid-ul-Adhia (Festival of Sacrifices—Next Day of Pilgrimage (Hajj))
- Jalsa Salana Canada (annual convention)

ISLAM: DAWOODI BOHRA (ISMAILI SHIA SECT)

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

ISLAM: ISMAILI

- Every Friday afternoon—congregational prayers
- Idd-e-Navroz (Persian New Year)
- Laylat-all-Qadr (Night of First Revelation—23rd day of Ramadan)
- Id-al-Fitr (1st after Ramadan)
- Imamat Day (Commemorating ascension to the Office of the Imamat by present Imam)
- Id-al-Adha (Making sacrifice of Prophet Abraham)
- Idd-e-Milad (Commemorating the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad—PBUH)
- Salgirah (Observing the birth of the Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims)

ISLAM: SHIA

- Every Friday afternoon—congregational prayers
- Mawlid Imam Zaman
- Laylatul Qadr (three days)
- Martyrdom of Iman Ali
- Jumatul-Wida
- Eid-ul-Fitr (1st after Ramadan)
- Day of Hajj (Day at Arafat)
- Eid-ul-Adha
- Eid-e-Ghadir
- First of Muharram (New Year's Day)
- Ashura
- Arbaeen (40th Day after Imam Hussain's Martyrdom)
- Mawlid-un-Nabi

ISLAM (SUNNI)

- Every Friday afternoon—congregational prayers
- Fasting Begins—1st day of Ramadan
- Eid-ul-Adha (one day, as well as accommodations for those taking the pilgrimage to Mecca)
- Eid-ul-Fitr (one day at the end of Ramadan)

Jainism

- Mahavir Jayanti
- Varshi Tapa/Akshaya Tritiya
- Guru Purnima
- Paryushana Parva Begins
- Samvantsari Paryushan Ends/Dashlaxana Parva Begins
- Kshamavani (Forgiveness Day)
- Ananta Chaturdasi
- Mahavir Nirvan (Diwali)
- New Year's Day and Day of Enlightenment of Lord Gautamswami
- Gnan/Gyan Panchami (Day of Knowledge)
- Maun Jiyaras (Agiyaras)

Judaism

JUDAISM (CONSERVATIVE)

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

- Pesach/Passover (1st, 2nd, 7th, and 8th days)
- Shavuot/Pentecost (two days)
- Rosh Hashanah/New Year (two days)
- Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (one day)
- Sukkoth (tabernacles—1st, 2nd, 8th, and 9th days)

JUDAISM (ORTHODOX)

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

- Purim
- Pesach/Passover (1st, 2nd, 7th, and 8th days)
- Yom ha-Shoah
- Shavuot/Pentecost (two days)
- Tisha B'Av
- Rosh Hashanah/New Year (two days)
- Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (one day)
- Sukkoth (Tabernacles)

- Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah (two days)
- Hanukkah

JUDAISM (REFORM)

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

- Pesach/Passover (1st, 2nd, and 7th days)
- Shavuot/Pentecost (two days)
- Rosh Hashanah/New Year (two days)
- Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (one day)
- Succot (Tabernacles)
- Simchat Torah

Sikhism

- Holi—a Hindu spring festival in India and Nepal, known as the festival of colours or the festival of sharing love, also celebrated by Sikhs
- Lohrri and Magh—popular festivals with limited religious significance
- Hola Mohalla
- Vaisakhi (Baisakhi)—celebrates the birth of the Khalsa and usually falls on April 13
- Bandi Chhor Divas (Diwali)—a festival of lights of Hindu origins that is also celebrated by Sikhs

Important anniversaries associated with the lives of the Gurus are referred to as Gurburbs. Among the larger Gurburb celebrations are

- Phalia Prakash Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (First installation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in the Golden Temple by Guru Arjan Dev)
- Birth of Guru Nanak (traditionally celebrated in November)
- Parkash Utsav Dasveh Patshah (Birth of Guru Gobind Singh end of December or early January)
- Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev (usually in June)
- Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (usually in October)
- Martyrdom of The Sahibzadas (the sons of Guru Gobind Singh)

Wicca

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

- Imbolc/Candlemas
- Ostara (Spring Equinox)
- Beltane/Beltaine (May Eve and May Day)
- Midsummer/Litha (Summer Solstice)
- Lammas/Lughnasadh
- Mabon (Autumnal Equinox)
- Samhain/Hallowmas
- Yuel/Yule (Winter Solstice)

Zoroastrian

Notes:

1. Nowruz occurs on one day between the 19th and 22nd. Although it is traditionally listed as the 21st, it can be celebrated on one of the other days instead.
 2. Dates will change as Zoroastrians follow a 365-day calendar without a leap-year day.
 3. Various Zoroastrian calendars have evolved over time and are in use. There are currently three main calendars in use: Fasli, Shahanshahi, and Qadimi/Kadmi. The holy days listed below correspond with two of the calendars: (F) Fasli; (S) Shenshahil
- Jashn-E-Sadeh (F)
 - Noruz (F) (New Year)
 - Birthday of Prophet Ashu Zarathustra (F)
 - Farvardingan (F)
 - Ashu Zarathustra's Death Anniversary (S)
 - Norooz (S)
 - Farvardigan (S)
 - Mehregan (F)
 - Ashu Zarathustra's Death Anniversary (F)