**Inter-Religious Greetings for Holy Days and Festivals (2023)**

**Introduction**

Public expressions of greeting and celebration from churches and church leaders to our inter-religious neighbours are small, but potentially powerful symbols of our commitment to peaceful friendship and mutual learning between traditions. Such gestures are not mere tokenism or virtue signaling, but an opportunity to model for our members the importance of knowing and honouring the beliefs and customs of other people of faith and goodwill in our wider society.

The following document is intended as a reference sheet for some of the main religious observances within the Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist communities. It offers brief descriptions of the meanings and sentiments connected with these occasions and celebrations, as well as sample templates for greetings that could be shared on behalf of churches and/or church leaders.

The dates for many of these festivals and commemorations vary to some degree annually, meaning that scheduling and planning well in advance is needed in order to be aware of when they fall in any given year and to coordinate this in relation to other communications priorities. The following online calendar is a helpful source for determining specific dates year over year: [interfaith-calendar.org](https://www.interfaith-calendar.org/index.htm)

Although there are many more spiritual and religious communities than those listed below who are represented in Canada, and multiple annual observances for each of them, these few have particular significance within the traditions that tend most often to be our neighbours in this land today.

**2022 Quick Reference**

Ramadan: sundown March 22

Vaisakhi: April 14

Pesach: sundown April 5 to sundown April 13

Eid al-Fitr: sundown April 21

Vesak: May 5

Eid al-Adha: sundown June 28/29

Rosh Hashana: sundown September 15 to sundown September 17

Yom Kippur: sundown September 24 to sundown September 25

Diwali: Nov. 12

Hanukkah: sundown December 7 to sundown December 15

**Ramadan – sundown March 22**

*Varying annually throughout the year according to the beginning of the Islamic calendar’s month of Ramadan, this day begins a month of fasting during the daylight hours and other acts of spiritual rigour and devotion.*

Greetings of Peace to our Muslim siblings in humanity. As you begin in these days a season of fasting and special devotion to God, may the blessings of this sacred time give you inspiration and courage as you seek to face all of life’s joys and challenges. Ramadan Mubarak!

**Vaisakhi – Apr. 14**

*Celebrated each year on either Apr. 13 or 14, Vaisakhi is a harvest celebration which also has special significance to Sikh’s as the date of the foundation of the order of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh.*

To all who celebrate the sacred day of Vaisakhi, and in particular our dear neighbours of the Sikh community, we greet you in friendship and with shared joy as you celebrate the abundance of creation. We also give thanks with you for the abundance that comes to our communities from those who dedicate themselves to service of the wider human family. May the year ahead be a harvest of blessings for you and all those you love.

**Pesach/Passover – sundown Apr. 5 to Apr. 13**

*Taking place between late Mar. and mid Apr., Pesach is the remembrance of the Passover of the LORD, leading to the liberation of the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt.*

To our friends in the Jewish community as you take part in the festival of Passover in these coming days, we wish you every blessing. May the story of the Exodus, and its promises of the possibilities for liberation from evil, inspire you yet again; may you connect in joy with family and friends as you celebrate. Chag Pesach Sameach!

**Eid al-Fitr – sundown Apr. 21**

*Varying throughout the year according to the end of the Islamic calendar’s month of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr is a joyful celebration to mark the conclusion of the month of Ramadan and its emphasis on fasting and devotion.*

Greetings of peace to all people of peace, and special blessings to our Muslim neighbours as you conclude the month of Ramadan with the celebrations of Eid al-Fitr. In this holy month of fasting, you have borne witness to God’s place above all things. Now as you feast on God’s many blessings, may you bless many others as you graciously seek to share with them. Eid Mubarak!

**Vesak – May 5**

*Occurring always in the months of April, May, or June, Vesak is a celebration of the birth of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Theravada Buddhism. In some Buddhist traditions it also marks his attainment of enlightenment.*

Warm and friendly greetings to all followers of the way of Buddhism and all who observe the Vesak festival. As you mark the birth and enlightenment of the Buddha, and reflect on its meaning, may the message of a way of compassion and service to others inspire you and bring you peace.

**Eid al-Adha – sundown June 28/29**

*Eid al-Adha takes place on the 10th day of the month of al-Hajj. It commemorates the conclusion of the season of making pilgrimage to Mecca which is called upon from all Muslims at least once in their lifetime.*

As the annual Hajj pilgrimage draws to a close, we wish our Muslim friends a most meaningful celebration of Eid al-Adha. We offer our prayers for God’s blessings upon you as you continue to live these commitments in the coming year ahead. Eid Mubarak!

**Rosh Hashana – sundown Sept. 15-17**

*Happening between early Sept. and mid Oct., the two-day festival of the Jewish New Year begins a season of self-examination in preparation for ten days later with the Day of Atonement.*

Kind and sincere greetings to our Jewish neighbours as your communities prepare to celebrate these festival days of Rosh Hashana. May faith continue to grant you the hope and resilience needed for the opportunities and uncertainties that lie before us. In times of joy or challenge in the year ahead, may we stand in friendship together. Shana Tova, and may you be written in the book of life, health, and happiness.

**Yom Kippur – sundown Sept. 25-25**

*Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement is the holiest day of the year in Judaism and focuses on confession and repentance of misdoings in the hope of forgiveness from God.*

On this holy day we wish our friends in the Jewish community the blessings of mercy and forgiveness. May this Day of Atonement bring you and your loved ones renewed peace and happiness as you are reminded of God’s great love for you.

**Diwali – Nov. 12**

*Always falling in Oct. or Nov., Diwali is as five-day New Year festival celebrated by Hindus, Sikh’s, and Jains. Its symbols emphasize the sweetness and light which spiritual life brings to life.*

To all our friends of the Hindu, Sikh, and Jain traditions, and all who celebrate the festival of Diwali, we offer our sincere greetings and well wishes during this special time. May the beautiful sights and sounds of your celebrations in these days inspire joy-filled living throughout the coming year, and may you be blessed with hope, health, and happiness. Happy Diwali, one and all!

**Hanukkah – sundown Dec. 17-15**

*Hanukkah is an eight-day festival of lights celebrating Divine liberation and freedom from persecution during the Maccabean era. It occurs between late Nov. and late Dec. depending on the year.*

To our beloved friends in the Jewish community who celebrate the eight days of Hanukkah, we pray the peace of God be with you. May you feel the light and warmth of God’s miracles at work in your midst from times long ago and all the way up to today; may every one of us be grateful for the Divine gifts we are blessed to receive in many different ways. Hanukkah Sameach!