

# MENNONITE

## (Low German Mennonites from Latin America)

### The Religion

The Mennonite community in Essex County is diverse. This document covers the beginning of the Anabaptist/Mennonite movement in Europe. The main focus is the Low German Mennonite group that has moved, and continues to move to Essex County from Latin America, mainly Mexico.

Mennonites are a branch of the Christian Church, with roots in the radical wing of the Sixteenth Century Protestant Reformation. Part of the group known as Anabaptists (because they rebaptized adult believers), the Mennonites took their name from Menno Simons, a Dutch priest who converted to the Anabaptist faith and became their spiritual leader. Modern day Mennonites number over 1 million worldwide, with churches in North and South America, Africa, Europe and Asia. Mennonites are known for their emphasis on issues such as peace, justice, simplicity, community, service, and mutual aid.

In keeping with their spiritual roots, Mennonites still believe in the close textual readings of the Scriptures and a personal spiritual responsibility as the basis of their faith. Radical from the beginning but later considered conservative in many of their beliefs, Mennonites have come to represent a spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs. Pacifism is one of the cornerstones of the Mennonite faith, prompting many young Mennonites to elect service to the church rather than military service. The Mennonite church emphasizes service to others as an important way of expressing one's faith. A large number of Mennonites spend part of their lives working as missionaries or volunteers helping those in need, nationally or internationally, through agencies such as Mennonite Central Committee.

### The Basic Tenets of the Mennonite Faith are:

- Adult baptism
- Principle of non-resistance
- Affirmation of Truth rather than swearing of an oath
- Separation of church and state.
- Discipleship
- Service/Mutual Aid

### There are two main branches of the Mennonite Faith:

- Swiss Mennonites
- Russian Mennonites (originally from the Netherlands and Northern Germany)

To escape persecution, many Mennonites fled Western Europe for the more accommodating religious climate of the Americas or Catherine the Great's Russia. Thus the reason for the distinctly different cultural heritages of the two groups of Mennonites.

## Swiss Mennonites

The Swiss Mennonites are known as the “Old Order” and may include groups like the Amish people. Attracted by available, inexpensive land, as well as the prospect of living under British rule, the first few Swiss Mennonite families left Pennsylvania shortly after the U.S. War for Independence in 1776. Following what came to be known as the “Trail of the Conestoga” they trekked in covered wagons to settle in the Niagara Peninsula and along the Grand River of what is now Ontario. From 1785 – 1825 more Mennonites from Pennsylvania crossed the Niagara River. Many settled in Waterloo County, where Benjamin Eby founded Ebytown (present-day Kitchener) in 1807. During this 40-year period about 2000 people came to Ontario from the United States.

Beginning in the 1820’s some **Amish** families also began to move north from Pennsylvania. In 1825 Amish families began to flow steadily into Upper Canada directly from Europe: from Alsace and Lorraine in France, as well as Bavaria and other regions of Germany. Landing on the east coast of the United States, these settlers set out for Ontario on horseback, by cart, and on foot. Many settled just west of Waterloo County in Wilmot township. By 1850 about 1000 Amish people had arrived in Ontario. In fact, there were virtually no Amish left in Europe; discrimination and the Napoleonic Wars pushed them to migrate to North America.

There continues to be a significant Swiss Mennonite population in these areas. As of 1998, there were about 20 distinct groups of Mennonites active in Southern Ontario. As a result of their dress and modes of transportation (horse and buggy, bicycle), the Old Order Mennonites of Waterloo Region are probably the most distinctive. It is important to note that the majority of Mennonites in southern Ontario, however, cannot be easily distinguished from the rest of society.

## Russian Mennonites

Russian Mennonites were noted for being successful farmers and entrepreneurs. In Russia, under the rule of Catherine the Great, Russian Mennonites were given land, exempted from military service and allowed to live, farm and worship in peace. During the last half of the Nineteenth Century and the early part of the Twentieth Century, due to civil unrest and reform movements in Russia, Russia Mennonites were essentially forced out of Russia.

Many Russian Mennonites migrated to Canada: There have been three major migrations of Mennonites from Russia to Canada. The first migration took place in the mid 1870’s (It is important to note, that the Low German Mennonites from Latin America who are returning to Canada trace their past to this migration). The second migration took place from 1923-1930. The third migration happened after World War II.

The migration of the mid 1870’s, the main focus of this document, took place as Canada sought to settle and develop the Western prairies. The Canadian government began to advertise and accept European immigrants, especially those with farming skills. The possibility of cheap and even free farmland along with guarantees of religious freedoms and exemptions from military service, were extremely attractive. Russian Mennonites settled first in Manitoba and then also in Saskatchewan. During this early period Russian Mennonites prospered. They built and supported their own schools.

During and after World War I the Manitoba and Saskatchewan governments took steps limiting the Mennonite way of life by requiring that English be taught by certified teachers. This caused about 7000 Mennonites to leave Manitoba and Saskatchewan and move to Mexico and Paraguay. In Mexico and Paraguay they were given privileges to establish their own colonies (settlements) with each village having a school in which High German was the language of instruction.

The migration of Low German Mennonites from Mexico to Ontario started in the early 1950's. In the 1980's and 1990's this migration increased dramatically. In Essex County, most of the Low German Mennonites from Mexico, (although some have also come from Paraguay, Bolivia, Argentina and Belize) are more traditional than those Mennonites who came from Russia in the 1920's and after World War II. However, it is important to note that Low German Mennonites from Mexico are not a homogeneous group.

For the most part, Low German Mennonites speak "Plautdietsch" or Low German, and have learned High German in their schools and churches. In Ontario, most Low German Mennonites are members or adherents of the Old Colony Mennonite Church of Ontario. Other Mennonite churches such as the Kleine Gemeinde, the Evangelical Mennonite Missions Conference (EMMC), the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC), Reinland Fellowship, New Reinland and Bergthaler also serve primarily Low German Mennonites from Mexico.

Migrations have shaped the Low German Mennonites from Mexico. Some Low German Mennonite families have tended to move back and forth between Mexico and Canada following the planting and harvest seasons.

## **Religious Accommodation for Low German Mennonites**

### **Non-Conformity**

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

From their upbringing in a "Mennonite" colony many of the Low German Mennonites believe that the style of clothes, cars, technology and many other things distract, or get in the way of hearing or paying attention to the will of God. There are wide variations between the traditional and less traditional Mennonites in Ontario and in Essex County in terms of tolerance levels for these potential distractions.

The more traditional Low German Mennonites are concerned with the style of clothes, hair styles and make-up. Televisions are discouraged; there is general discomfort with the use of computers in the home and school. There is also a strong desire to have the children learn Low German and to keep the High German in order to sing the High German songs and to understand the Bible and catechism instruction of the church.

The less traditional Mennonite communities also stress the importance of being different from the surrounding culture, but do not require certain clothing or reject particular aspects of modern technology. These groups believe that new technological possibilities need to be tempered with sound judgment. In other words, just because people can do something does not necessarily mean that they should.

Both groups believe that being a Christian and following Jesus, affects every aspect of life (discipleship). Job, style of clothes, money and relationships come under the authority and guidance of God.

### **School Accommodation**

Students who adhere strictly to the more traditional Mennonite belief system surrounding non-conformity may be subject to social pressure which may lead to teasing by other students. These students should feel supported, and there should be a climate of acceptance. The student body should be aware of the consequences of harassing students because of their religious beliefs.

## **Mennonite Holy Day Observances**

Low German Mennonites celebrate the traditional Protestant holy days, Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Most of the families also celebrate Easter Monday and Pentecost Monday. In addition, many Low German Mennonites also celebrate two other days of significance, Epiphany and Ascension Day.

### **School Accommodation**


Students / staff are to be excused from attendance from school for these holy days:

#### **Easter Monday and Pentecost Monday**

**Ascension Day** – Always on a Thursday, 40 days after Easter Sunday

**Epiphany** – January 6

Scheduling of all school and school-related activities should take Mennonite holy days into account. In the case of a conflict with assignments, exams and major tests, Mennonite students should be accommodated.



## Holidays

### Belief and Practices

Some Mennonites do not celebrate civic or national holidays that have non-Christian religious origins or those that promote patriotic exercises.

### School Accommodation

Do not extend invitations or expect participation in festivities or social functions surrounding celebrations such as Halloween and Remembrance Day. Provide alternate activities if exemptions are requested, and celebrations happen during class time.

## Social Events and School Dances

### Beliefs and Practices

Social events and school dances constitute an area of great concern to some traditional Low German Mennonite families. Gender relations in some traditional Low German Mennonite communities are predicated upon social distance between unrelated people of the opposite sex.



### School Accommodation

Consideration should be given to the timing of the event within the school day. Students should be given valuable alternative activities if a dance happens during school day.


## Curriculum Concerns

There are certain areas or aspects of the school curriculum where some Low German Mennonite families may request accommodation since they may find them to be in conflict with their religious beliefs.

It would be best to be reactive as opposed to proactive and allow the families in question to be the one to determine their degree of comfort.

## Human Sexuality – Healthy Active Living

### Beliefs and Practices



Most of the traditional Low German Mennonites believe that teaching children about sexuality is the responsibility of parents. Some parents may request that their children be excused from human sexuality classes.



## School Accommodation

For accommodation, please refer to E.8 Participation in Daily Activities and Curriculum Guidelines, page 12.

## Music

### Belief and Practices

Music is not in itself forbidden; it all depends on the type of music, its use, its instrument, and the persons involved.

### School Accommodation

When selecting songs, appropriateness of song lyrics should be taken into account. For example, songs celebrating human life, the well-being of society and the appreciation of nature could be acceptable to families requesting accommodation.

## Dance



### Belief and Practices

For some traditional Low German Mennonite families, the main concern surrounding the dance curriculum involves male-female interactions. Gender relations in some traditional Low German Mennonite communities are predicated upon social distance between unrelated people of the opposite sex.

### School Accommodation

Schools should ensure that these families know and understand the Dance curriculum so that they can come to an informed decision about co-education activities. Limiting physical contact between male and female students may be taken into consideration. Schools may wish to refer to the activity as “rhythmic movement” as opposed to “dance”.

*Developed in consultation with: Greg Yantzi, Pastor, Harrow Mennonite Church, Henry Dueck, Retired Pastor, Leamington United Mennonite Church and Henry Friesen, Deacon of the Old Colony Mennonite Church Ontario. With special thanks to Marvin Dueck, Project Leader of Low German Mennonite Educational Opportunities, GECDSB.*

# 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 225<sup>th</sup> King is Haile Sellassie I<sup>st</sup>. 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 people as "Ethiopians", and it has expressed the political, cultural, and spiritual aspirations of Africans in the Carribean 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 Carribean, 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 a I-tal, use of herbs for medicinal and ritual purposes, and a calendar devoted to the celebration of Ethiopian holy days.

## Religious Accommodation for Rastafari

### Rastafari Holy Day Observances

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.

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

Rastafari also honor 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”.

### **School Accommodation**

Accommodate as per request. For more information, please refer to E.2, Opening and Closing Exercises Guidelines, pages 8-9.

## **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.

### **School Accommodation**

Many Rastafari parents are concerned that alternative diets, such as theirs, are not considered in school cafeteria programs. Strict vegetarian options are recommended.

Rastafari students dietary needs should be considered with regards to out-of-school activities that require students to be away from home for more than a day. Outdoor facilities need to ensure appropriate dietary alternatives. There may be Rastafari students / staff who request the possibility of cooking their own meals in these situations.



## 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 colors 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 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 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 of the Board. Small tokens, emblems, buttons, badges, and shawls depicting symbolic colors of relevance to the culture should be allowed to be worn.

### School Accommodation

Schools with ‘no hat’ policies should be aware of Rastafari needs to cover dreadlocks. A letter from parents/guardians or elders regarding this need for accommodation is advisable to avoid misunderstandings.

## Curriculum Concerns

### Family Studies

#### Beliefs and Practices

**Blood:** When the body bleeds, it is going through a stage of purification and should be in a state of withdrawal.

Females do not worship during menstruation, and they abstain from cooking.

#### School Accommodation

Rastafari females may request to be allowed to refrain from cooking activities in Family Studies during their menstrual period.

*Developed in consultation with Ras Ishaka Williams.*

# SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

## 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's 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 Adventist 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](http://www.adventist.org))*

## Religious Accommodation for Seventh-Day Adventists

### 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.

#### School Accommodation

Schools should accommodate Seventh-day Adventist students and staff in the scheduling of schools requirements prior to and during the Sabbath, sunset Friday to Saturday. Weekend expectations should include school activities on the Sabbath, e.g., work expectations or attending music festivals or camp.

## **Dietary Considerations**

Seventh-day Adventists encourage a vegetarian lifestyle and in general do not eat animal products.

### **School Accommodation**

Teachers and cafeteria staff must be aware of food restrictions wherever and whenever food is served. Availability of vegetarian options are advisable in school cafeterias, elementary school snacks, breakfast or lunch programs, as well as in the occasion of overnight stays and school or Board events that involve a meal.

## **Curriculum Concerns**

### **Halloween**

Halloween is considered to be a pagan celebration, which in the past included rituals with some ties to chasing away evil spirits.

### **School Accommodation**

Some Seventh-day Adventist parents may request that their children be exempted from any activities related to Halloween. If exemptions are requested, provision of curricular alternatives is recommended.

*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 (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.

## Religious Accommodation for Sikhs

### 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.

#### School Accommodation

Accommodation will be needed for students attending overnight camps. A clean, quiet room is needed for worship. Worshippers normally sit on a rug or a mat, and before worshipping, there should be time for washing. Teachers should be aware of the length of each prayer time to ensure that students have enough time to pray before breakfast and supper.



## Sikhism Holy Day Observances

### Beliefs and Practices


Sikhs meet in congregation for prayer and a common meal on the following 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 honors 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 women devotee, Mai Bhago, died

### Holla Mohalla

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

### **Martydrom 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.

### **Martydrom 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.

### **School Accommodation**

Scheduling of all school and school-related activities should take Sikh holy days into account. In the case of a conflict with assignments, exams, and major tests, Sikh students should be accommodated.

Holy days that most Sikhs will be absent from school:

	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>
<i>Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh</i>	January 5	January 5
<i>Vaisakhi Day</i>	April 13 or 14	April 13 or 14
<i>Birthday of Guru Nanak</i>	November 26	November 25

## Dress Requirements, Religious Attire

It is hoped that schools breed an atmosphere of tolerance and respect to 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 made 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 and 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 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**, women may also wear a turban. Boys wear a handkerchief called a **patka** until they are old enough to be able to wear a turban. The turban itself is a five to seven-meter piece of cotton cloth.

### School Accommodation

The turban is an essential adjunct to the uncut hair of a Khalsa Sikh. It is an identity symbol for all Sikhs, even those who are not yet Khalsa Sikhs. The wearing of a turban or patka may lead to teasing by other students. The knocking off of the turban is a great affront to the Sikh religion and is a personal insult to the wearer. All students should understand the serious consequences of harassing students because of their religious dress.

Sikh students / staff should be allowed to wear the turban or a patka. School uniforms and/or no-hat policies should be modified to accommodate Sikhs. Sikh students will usually replace the turban for a patka when participating in organized sports or for swimming. Accommodations for wearing/protecting of a turban and/or a patka in Physical Education, swimming, and organized sports should be made.

2. **Kangha** (wooden comb) is a symbol of physical cleanliness, orderliness, 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.

### School Accommodation

See the accommodations under Kesh.

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 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.

### School Accommodation

#### PROCEDURES FOR KIRPAN ACCOMMODATION

Schools will accommodate Khasla Sikh students and staff who wear a kirpan under the following conditions:

- At the beginning of the school year or upon registration, the student and parents/guardians must report to the school administration that they are Khalsa Sikhs and wear the five articles of faith.
- The kirpan is small (six inches or less)
- The kirpan will be sufficiently secure to render removal difficult.
- The kirpan should not be worn visibly, but under the wearer's clothing.
- There is notification in writing to the principal by parents/guardians and student and, where possible, from the Gurdwara (place of worship), confirming that the student requesting accommodation is a Khalsa Sikh.
- Students under 18 must be accompanied by parents/guardians when discussing the rules regarding the wearing of the kirpan.

The principal and student, in consultation with the parent/guardian, will discuss program modifications to ensure that there will not be any situations where the wearing of kirpan could inadvertently cause physical harm to the wearer or to another individual in the school.

The procedure for kirpan accommodation has been developed in consultation with the Ontario Multifaith Council's Sikh representative.



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.

**School Accommodation**

No religious accommodations are needed.

5. **Kach:** (specially designed undergarment) is a symbol of chastity and modesty.

**School Accommodation**

There may be need for accommodation in Physical Education uniforms. Some students may want to wear their kach under their gym shorts.

*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 1860's in Massachusetts, USA, when Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910) began to teach and practise 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, 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 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.

*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, Page 496:*

"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. But the belief in sin is punished so long as 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."

## Religious Accommodation for Church of Christ, Scientist

### 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” [*Educational 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.

#### School Accommodation

Where religious accommodations provide for exemption from immunizations (such as does the Ontario Immunization of School Pupils Act), Christian Scientists typically exercise these options.

Parents or legal guardians should inform the principal, upon registration, if they choose care for their child that would differ from the care ordinarily provided. When this is done, if a Christian Science student becomes ill or incapacitated while at school or on a school supervised field trip, the teacher(s) responsible for the child will know what steps the parents wish to be taken.

Some Christian Science parents may request, as well, exemptions from classes in human sexuality, disease awareness, human biology, and other health related courses. They may also request to have their children excused from school-sponsored medical-intervention programs.

*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 Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.*

## APPENDIX 2

### Religious Holy Days

This Summary of Religious Holy Days is adapted from *the Multicultural Calendar 2004-2005*, which was developed through consultation with Creative Cultural Communications; a non-profit organization.

Schools and workplaces may wish to use this Calendar as a general guide to the observances of members of their diverse school communities. It is provided for information only, and the dates listed correspond to the academic calendar year 2004-2005. While the names of the observances will remain the same, the dates for solar and other calendars will change from year to year.

Schools are reminded to follow collective agreements for the granting of requests for leave from members of staff.

For more detailed information please refer to the monthly "Multicultural Calendar" distributed to each school through the Diversity Office. To obtain a copy please call the Diversity Office at 255-3213.

For more information please contact the Diversity Office at 255-3213.

# APPENDIX 2

## Religious Holy Days

This Summary of Religious Holy Days is adapted from *the Multicultural Calendar 2005-2006*, which was developed through consultation with Creative Cultural Communications; a non-profit organization.

Schools and workplaces may wish to use this Calendar as a general guide to the observances of members of their diverse school communities. It is provided for information only, and the dates listed correspond to the academic calendar year 2005-2006. While the names of the observances will remain the same, the dates for solar and other calendars will change from year to year.

Schools are reminded to follow collective agreements for the granting of requests for leave from members of staff.

For more detailed information please refer to the monthly "Multicultural Calendar" distributed to each school through the Diversity Office. To obtain a copy please call the Diversity Office at 255-3213.

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# Summary by Faith of Religious Holy Days

## September 2005 to August 2006

*(Capitalized days are the most important days and some people may abstain from work)*

Religious Denomination	Holy Days	Dates Noted are Year 2005-2006 Observances (for subsequent years, check the Multicultural Calendar)
<b>BAHÁ'Í</b> <i>(All holy days begin at sunset the day before the date listed and end at sundown on the date listed)</i>	The Birth of the Bab The Birth of Baba'u'llah The Day of the Covenant Ascension of Avdu'l-Baha Intercalary Days The Baha'i Fast Naw Ruz (New Year) RIDVAN BEGINS ♦ Declaration of the Bab Ascension of Baha'u'llah Martydom of the Bab	October 20 November 12 November 26 November 28 February 26 – March 1 March 2-20 March 21 APRIL 21 May 23 May 29 July 9
<b>BUDDIISM</b>	Ullambana Pavarana Kathina Temple Day LUNAR NEW YEAR ♦ Spring Ohigon Saka New Year Wesak Wassana	September 18 October 16 November 13 January 1 JANUARY 29 March 20 April 13/14 May 13 July 7

<p><b>CHRISTIANITY</b>  <b>EASTERN</b>  <b>ORTHODOX</b> (Eastern)  Calendar Western  (Gregorian) Calendar</p>	<p>Coptic New Year  World Communication Sunday  All Saints Day  First Sunday of Advent  <b>CHRISTMAS</b> (Western) ◆  Epiphany (Western)  <b>CHRISTMAS</b> (Eastern) ◆  Epiphany (Eastern)  Ash Wednesday (Western)  First Day of Lent (Eastern)  Palm Sunday (Western)  Maundy Thursday (Western)  Good Friday (Western)  Easter Sunday (Western)  Palm Sunday (Eastern)  <b>HOLY FRIDAY</b> (Eastern) ◆  Easter Sunday (Eastern)  Ascension Day (Western)  Pentecost (Western)</p>	<p>September 11  October 2  November 1  November 27  <b>DECEMBER 25</b>  January 6  <b>JANUARY 7</b>  January 19  March 1  March 6  April 9  April 13  April 14  April 16  April 16  <b>APRIL 21</b>  April 23  May 25  June 4</p>
<p><b>HINDUISM</b></p>	<p>Ganesh Chaturthi  Navaratri  <b>DIWALI</b>◆  Makar Sankranti  Vasant Panchami  Mahashivaratri (Shivaratri)  Holi  Ramanavami  Raksha Bandhan  Sri Krishna Jayanti  Ganesh Chaturthi</p>	<p>September 7  October 4-12  <b>NOVEMBER 1</b>  January 14  February 2  February 27  March 14  April 6  August 4  August 16  August 27</p>
<p><b>ISLAM</b></p>	<p>Miraj-un-Nabi  Nisfu-Shaban  First day of Ramadhan  Lailat-ul-Qadr  <b>EID-UL-FITR</b>◆  Hajj  <b>EID-UL-ADHA</b>◆  First Day of Muharram  Ashura  Mawlid-un-Nabi  Miraj-un-Nabi</p>	<p>September 1  September 19  October 4  October 30  <b>NOVEMBER 3</b>  January 9  <b>JANUARY 10</b>  January 31  February 9  April 10  August 22</p>

<b>JAINISM</b>	Ananta Chaturdasi Mahavira Nirvan Jnana Panchami Maun-agiyaras Mahavira-Jayanti	September 17 November 1 November 6 December 12 April 14
<b>JUDAISM</b> (All holy days begin at previous sundown) *Some Jews may abstain from work	<b>ROSH HASHANAH</b> ♦ <b>YOM KIPPUR</b> ♦ Sukkoth Shemini Atzeret Simhat Torah Chanukah Purim <b>PESAH/PASSOVER</b> ♦ Shavuot Tisha B'av	OCTOBER 4 -5 October 13 October 18-24 October 25 October 26 December 26-January 2 March 14 <b>APRIL 13-21</b> June 2-3 August 3
<b>SIKHISM</b> (The old lunar calendar is Bikarami; the new solar calendar is Nanakshahi) The dates are mostly Nanakshahi unless otherwise indicated	First Parkash Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadar Ji Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Ji Maghi Sikh New Year's Day <b>BAISASKHI</b> ♦ Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji	September 1 November 15 November 24  January 5 January 14 March 14 <b>APRIL 13</b> June 16
<b>WICCA</b>	Mabon Samham Yule Imbolc Ostara Beltane Litha Lammas	September 22 October 31 December 21 February 2 March 20 May 1 June 21 August 1
<b>ZOROASTRIANISM</b>	Death of Prophet Zarathustra Ghambar Hamapathmaedem Naw Ruz (New Year) Birthday of Prophet Zarathustra Ghambar Maidyoshem Naw Ruz (Shenshai)	December 26  March 17 March 21 March 26 June 29–July 3 August 21