

LIPC Newsletter

London Interfaith Peace Camp Initiatives

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Preparing our Hearts and Minds

In these last months, each of the Abrahamic faiths has taken time to prepare their hearts and minds for special holy times in their faith traditions. We are so thrilled for LIPC families who have come forward to share their experience. We hope that you are able to learn something new from reading this April edition. Maybe you were unaware of how our Muslim brothers and sisters prepare for Ramadan or maybe there is something unfamiliar about the meals and prayers that take place during Passover for the Jewish community. At Easter time for Christians, Pastor Charleen and her Church community will explain the meaning of this church season, beyond the chocolate and bunnies! Many blessings to each of you.

The Blessed Month of Ramadhan



One of the most exciting times of the year is here for the Muslim community!! It is the month of Ramadhan, where Muslims fast from food and drinks (even water), along with any haram (forbidden) acts which may break our fast (i.e., backbiting, swearing, etc.).

Although we must not commit such acts throughout the year, we are extra careful to abstain from such sins during this holy month. At this time of the year, my family and I are busy preparing for the holy month of Ramadhan. My mom and I are preparing and storing snacks in our freezer, cleaning our house in order to have a clean and pure atmosphere in this holy month, and my family is also making up any missed fasts from last year.

Ramadhan is my favorite Islamic month of the year. While fasting teaches me self-control and patience, I believe Ramadhan is much more than just fasting from food. This pious month is special to me since it helps me get closer to Allah (swt) on a personal and communal level. Fasting throughout the day, reading the Holy Qur'an, and performing my daily prayers on time in the midst of school and other commitments makes me closer to God in this month. At the same time, having suhoor (meal before we start our fast) and iftaar (meal after we open our fast) with my family, gives a sense of unity. Throughout the year, there are many times where my family is not able to have all meals together due to respective busy schedules, however in the month of Ramadhan, all members of my family make sure to have suhoor and iftaar together, due to set timings of these meals.

The Blessed Month of Ramadhan Continued

While Ramadhan has been different these two years due to the pandemic, it was a time where my immediate family got more time to spend with each other. Along with this, I also got more time to work on spiritually purifying my soul and taking part in more solitude worship. During this month, prior to COVID, we would be invited to several iftaar gatherings or we would go to the mosque. Although I do immensely miss these blissful moments where I would meet my family, friends, and community members, having a break from such gatherings did give my family more time to spend with each other, which to me is a great blessing!

The month of Ramadhan is also super important since it is the month when the Holy Qur'an—a divine guidance to Muslims—was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). Every year, each member of my family finishes the whole Holy Qur'an throughout the span of 30 days. On the 30th day, once we finish the Qur'an, we gift the rewards of it to deceased members of our family and community. This act of worship once again unites the Muslim community as we all learn lessons from the Holy Qur'an and remember the deceased. Our Ramadhan nights are spent in prayers and acts of worship along with my mom and I watching cooking videos and Ramadhan transmissions (shows). As a family, we collectively motivate each other to indulge in good acts and abstain from any bad deeds. During this month, my family and I also like to make donations to those in need as this month specially emphasizes on remembering those who are unprivileged. We also distribute food to our family, friends, and neighbors in order to share the joys of this month with one another. While personal spiritual growth is a major aspect of Ramadhan, working collectively with the community to attain spiritual closeness with God and sharing blissful moments with one another plays a substantial role in this holy month!!

By Kulsum Ali, Team Lead for LIPC Camp Counsellors

Passover

SEDER PLATE FOR 2021



The spring holiday of Pesach, called Passover in English, is central to the history of the Jewish people. It commemorates the Exodus of the descendants of Abraham following 400 years of living in Egypt where our ancestors were enslaved and forced to build the pyramids. Our leader Moses asked the Egyptian leader called Pharoah to "Let my people go" but he refused until God caused Ten Plagues to befall the Egyptians. When the Pharoah finally agreed, the Israelites had to flee quickly and they could only bring with them a dough made without yeast so it couldn't rise like normal bread. It is said that 600,000 men plus women and children wandered in the desert under the leadership of Moses for forty years before arriving in the Land of Israel and to this day, Jews eat a flat bread called matzah during the eight days of the festival.

Passover Continued

Pesach begins on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Nisan which falls in the spring with a festive family meal called a Seder. The ancient story is retold using a special book called a Haggadah and special symbolic foods are eaten. The Passover Seder is the most celebrated Jewish holiday with families often traveling great distances to be together. That, of course, was pre-Covid-19, so family members now celebrate safely from their own homes with their relatives via Zoom. This holiday is basically a home-based one with only one special service in the synagogue but again, with Covid, via computer screens this year. Temple Israel of London has always held a community Seder in our building on the second night and this year, we will "meet" for our second Seder via Zoom. The end of the Seder traditionally ends with the words "Next year in Jerusalem" so we now can humorously add the words "Next year in person" as well. After eight days of eating matzah and avoiding baked goods made with yeast or baking powder, we return to eating our usual foods and look forward to our next major holiday, Shavuot, which celebrates receiving the Ten Commandments and the Torah at Mount Sinai.

By Wally Zimmerman, Temple Israel of London



Easter Time

Peace, Salaam, Shalom! It has been a few years since I was able to be a part of bringing the vision of the London Interfaith Peace Camp into reality and I am so proud of how the current leadership has continued to advance our vision of making peace through friendship. I am currently the pastor of a rural Mennonite church in Leamington Ontario, not far from Windsor-Detroit.



We have just come out of celebrating our highest holiday of the church year - Easter. While the stores in Canada might have you believe that this holiday centres around chocolate, bunnies and eggs, in the Christian church we are centred around the death and resurrection of Jesus. In our congregation we had quite a few things going on over the Easter weekend to help us focus on this central story of our faith.

Since our congregation is worshiping online during the pandemic, our family prepared a lot of musical recordings of our favourite Good Friday and Easter songs for the two main Zoom worship services on that Friday and Sunday. We probably recorded 20 songs altogether. In our Good Friday service we read Bible passages that told the story of Jesus' last days, and interspersed that with songs and a few other brief reflections. We also celebrated the Lord's Supper online - we each prepared some bread and wine or juice at our own homes, and while we are apart, we shared that sacred meal together virtually. The congregation was also given the opportunity to reflect on the Good Friday stories through a prepared nature walk, with readings and prayers provided to accompany various Stations of the Cross which could be associated with natural settings.

Adult and family-friendly versions were provided. On the Saturday we hosted an outdoor, socially distanced Story Walk for our families, where families could walk through an illustrated retelling of Easter morning with each page as a separate stop along our church grounds.

On Easter Sunday morning, we greeted one another at sunrise over Facebook live with a few songs and a Scripture reading. Our favourite Easter tradition which is unique to our congregation involves decorating the cross with flowers during Easter morning. Last year we were unable to do this, but this year we had one doctor in our community representing the community, decorating the cross on behalf of all of us, while our Easter hymns were playing. In our home, we do enjoy Easter traditions like dying and decorating Easter eggs, sharing an Easter feast as a family, and preparing culturally specific Easter foods - my husbands family bakes a particular Easter bread called paska which is very eggy and sweet, not unlike the Jewish challah bread, but served with icing and sprinkles. Yum!

Greetings to my LIPC community; hoping that my Jewish friends had a blessed Pasach, and my Muslim friends have a blessed Ramadan.

Written by Pastor Charleen Jongejan Hard



Virtual Summer Camp 2021: Monday, August 23rd to Friday, August 27th

Online Registration Coming Soon

Visit our LIPC link at: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/campus-ministry/get-involved/children-and-family-programs/london-interfaith-peace-camp/camper-registrations/>

Leadership Training for Camp Counsellors and Counsellors In Training (CIT's)

Monday, July 26th to Friday, July 30th, 2021

(There will be times throughout the day to connect!)