



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

ORTHODOX EASTER

Inclusive Employer Guide

WHAT IS ORTHODOX EASTER?

Orthodox Easter is the celebration of Jesus' resurrection, also known as Pascha. Orthodox Christian tradition, which originated in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, celebrates Pascha in accordance with the Julian calendar, as opposed to Western churches which follow the Gregorian calendar. This is why Orthodox Easter falls on a different date to Easter Sunday. This year, Orthodox Holy Friday (Good Friday, focusing on Jesus' death), falls on April 17 while Orthodox Easter Sunday falls on April 19.

How is it observed?

Pascha is an important event in the church calendar in the Orthodox Church. Many Orthodox Christians attend church services during the Holy Week that leads up to Easter Sunday, especially on Holy Friday. For many Orthodox Christians, Holy Friday is a strict day of fasting, and some Orthodox churches may have a Good Friday liturgy in the afternoons or evenings. The Easter Sunday church liturgy is joyous as it celebrates Jesus Christ's resurrection, as told in the Christian bible.

The period before Easter, known as Lent, is also a time of strict fasting and self-reflection. Orthodox Christians in Canada observe this fasting ritual before celebrating Easter Sunday with a feast, where meat and dairy products can be eaten again. Another tradition observed in Orthodox Christian churches is the blessing of food baskets. The baskets are usually filled with bread, cheese, meat, eggs, butter, salt, and other types of food used for Paschal celebrations.

Symbols of Orthodox Easter include hard boiled eggs, dyed red to reference the blood of Christ. Lamb is another important symbol. Jesus is thought to have sacrificed himself for the sins of others, and is thus described by John the Apostle as the Lamb of God.

It is customary for Orthodox Christians to greet one another during the Easter season with the Paschal greeting. This begins with the phrase, "Christ is Risen!", and the response is "Christ is Risen, indeed!"

The phrase "Christos Anesti" (Greek for "Christ is Risen") is also the title of a traditional Orthodox Easter hymn sung during Easter services in celebration of Jesus Christ's resurrection.

HOW CAN WE CREATE AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT?

- 1 Get educated.** Ensure staff who supervise self-identified Orthodox Christian colleagues are aware of Orthodox Easter and how they can be supportive.
- 2 Intentional planning.** Be considerate when booking meetings or events in the time leading up to it, especially for Orthodox Holy Friday.
- 3 Be flexible.** Accommodate requests for time off for religious observances. If shift work is the norm, staff may want to swap shifts to observe Orthodox Easter or associated events. Look for solutions that suit all parties.
- 4 Don't make assumptions.** For personal reasons, not all Orthodox Christian colleagues will observe Easter in the same way.