

# Vaisakhi



## VAISAKHI LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Teachers and leaders can adapt the following to suit their own needs.
- The methodology that worked best on the pilots was 'circle time'. For more information about methodologies that build a positive learning environment please see the chapter on group work and facilitation in Lynagh N and M Potter, *Joined Up* (Belfast: NICIE, Corrymeela) 2005, pp 43 - 86. There is a hyperlink to this in the 'Getting Started' section of the 'Introduction'.
- Teachers/leaders need to explore and be comfortable with their own identity before discussing identity with the class/group. It is also important for us to accept others both for the ways in which we are different and also the ways in which we are similar. It is important to be positive and also to know more about our identity and express it in ways that do not harden boundaries with others. You can find out more about sectarianism and approaches to difference in the trunk and branches sections of the downloadable 'Moving Beyond Sectarianism'(young adults) at: [www.tcd.ie/ise/projects/seed.php#mbspacks](http://www.tcd.ie/ise/projects/seed.php#mbspacks)
- It is important that parents are aware of the issues in this unit. Write a letter to let them know what you will be covering and why. You could also involve parents/extended family by sending a 'knitted puppet' pattern home and ask if any of them could make some for you.

<p><b>STEPPING OUT LEARNING ACTIVITY</b>  <b>VAISAKHI</b>          A programme for 4 sessions of 30 - 40 minutes  <b>LEARNING INTENTION:</b>          In sharing our stories of the celebrations of events throughout the year and focusing on Vaisakhi, we recognise the similarities and differences amongst us as citizens of different ethnic/cultural background in the local and wider community</p>	<p><b>SUGGESTED SUCCESS CRITERIA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will explore and discuss community events and learn more about Vaisakhi and how it is celebrated</li> <li>• We will share the story Sikh's remember at Vaisakhi</li> <li>• We will continue to build trust and learn more about one another</li> <li>• We will encourage active listening, empathy and interactive storytelling</li> <li>• We will share our knowledge and understanding of similarities and differences amongst people of different ethnic/cultural background in the wider community</li> <li>• We will share and evaluate what we have learnt from a baseline</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Exploring My Identity</b> This column gives suggestions for a lesson outline</p> <p><b>SESSION 1</b> <b>Opening Activity</b> <b>Events Calendar</b> - Talk about celebrations and events throughout the year. How many events can we recognise or talk about? Focus on Vaisakhi. What do we know about Vaisakhi or the Sikh Community in Belfast? Introduce some words - Sikh; Guru; Gurdwara; Langar. Talk about head coverings (turbans). When and why do we cover our heads or remove our shoes? How many of us worship God/pray regularly? <b>Religious and social events</b> - Share stories about church/temple and various events around the same time as Vaisakhi - Lent; Maundy Thursday; Good Friday; Easter; Ridván etc. Introduce the <b>Singh family (puppets)</b>. Talk about their clothes and where the different members of the family were born/came from. It might be good to have a <b>map or globe</b> handy. Talk about differences in language; clothes; customs; traditions within the family and within the local/wider community and the challenges that might bring. <b>Closure - passing the globe</b></p>	<p><b>DETAIL OF WHAT TO DO</b> This column lists resources needed and gives sources for background information for each lesson</p> <p><b>SESSION 1</b> <b>Opening and Closing activities</b> - Choose appropriate activities for opening and closing each session from 'Games' in the Resources section <b>Events Calendar</b> - Print out your own copy from the 'Resources' section. Use this group activity as an opportunity to construct a baseline. <b>Religious Calendars</b> <a href="http://www.support4learning.org.uk">www.support4learning.org.uk</a> for religious Calendars - see also <a href="http://www.shap.org">www.shap.org</a> <b>Sikh Puppets</b> - Follow the instructions in the Resources section and as a 'whole school' activity, why not make a few of these (for a whole school resource) inviting staff, governors, parents and extended family members to participate? Make two - dress a boy puppet in a turban. There are good sites on the internet to help you wrap the turban correctly! See <a href="http://www.sikhnet.com/s/TurbanHeritage">www.sikhnet.com/s/TurbanHeritage</a> Dress a girl puppet in a Shalwar Kameez. See <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shalwar_kameez">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shalwar_kameez</a>. Think about making other members of the family and telling the family's story as a puppet presentation. The man will have the surname Singh and the woman Kaur - see background notes in this section. <b>Flashcards</b> - you will need these to help remember new words - Sikh; Vaisakhi; Guru; Gurdwara; Langar etc. <b>Map of the world</b> - Invest in an inflatable globe. Passing it around the circle as an opening or closing activity, inviting people to find the country - where they live now; have lived before; have visited or know someone.</p>
<p><b>SESSION 2</b> <b>Opening Activity - Clumps</b> <b>Discussion</b> - Talk about our behaviour - do we choose to be near our 'friends' or find the person nearest in order to play the game? Talk about feelings - being 'in' or 'out' of a clump. Acknowledge difference. Talk about the way we as human beings form clumps - groups we feel part of e.g. a family; or a community group 'Irish Sikhs'; 'Young girls;' etc. and how important it is to be in different groups so we aren't always 'excluded' or excluding others. <b>Sharing</b> - Share what we remember from last week about Vaisakhi and the Sikh Community - similarity; difference. How many words can we remember? <b>Sikh family</b> - Use the puppets if you have them and/or the <b>pictures</b> of the Gurdwara and the Temple in this section. Put them up in class or make overhead projector slides. Talk about how Sikhs spend the day at the <b>Gurdwara</b> on Sunday. Compare with how we spend Sunday. Talk about what Sikhs do when they meet at the Gurdwara. Share stories about meetings and celebrations - getting dressed up; visiting family members; going to church/Gurdwara/Temple; sharing a meal/the Langar. In what ways are we similar and different? Talk about the <b>5 K's</b>. Do we have similar symbols to help us remember God? <b>Closure - All Change</b> Try using specific statements</p>	<p><b>SESSION 2</b> <b>Clumps</b> - read the instructions for playing this game in 'Games' in the Resources section. <b>Pictures of the Gurdwara.</b> - Use the pictures of the Belfast Gurdwara in this section or get a copy of James Nelson and Norman Richardson's, <i>Local People, Global Faiths: Sikhs, Jews and Hindus in Northern Ireland 2005</i> available from Colourpoint Educational, price £7.99 and share some of the pictures via overhead projector of a Sikh Gurdwara in Belfast or L'Derry. These would probably mean more to them in preparation for or after a visit to the Gurdwara. <b>Background information</b> - you can get this on the internet - Try <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/schools/11_16/citizen_ship">www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/schools/11_16/citizen ship</a> <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/sikhism/customs">www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/sikhism/customs</a> <a href="http://www.sikhs.org/khanda.htm">www.sikhs.org/khanda.htm</a> <a href="http://www.allaboutsikhs.com/basics/sikhsymbols.htm">www.allaboutsikhs.com/basics/sikhsymbols.htm</a> <b>Flashcards</b> will be useful for helping us remember new words; adding the 5 k's <b>Puppets/Pictures/OHP slides</b> - print out the pictures of the Belfast Gurdwara in this section or copy pictures of the L'Derry Gurdwara from James and Norman's book. <b>All Change Game</b> - read the instructions for playing this game in 'Games' in the Resources section. Think</p>

<p>about customs &amp; traditions around celebration e.g. whether they ever:- visited India or a Gurdwara; sent cards to people for celebrations other than their own; went to church on Christmas day; celebrated Vaisakhi; have a name beginning with 'S'; etc.</p>	<p>about how you will use it.</p>
<p><b>SESSION 3</b>  <b>Opening Activity - Gate Game.</b>  <b>Discussion</b> Talk about the word 'minority' and what it means to be in the smaller 'minority' group re gender; eye colour; whether or not you wear glasses/a brace etc. Express preferences for a particular group over the other - e.g. boys are stronger than girls; people who wear glasses are more intelligent etc. Talk about 'discrimination' against people according to gender; eye/hair colour; age; skin colour; or religion and introduce the terms racism; and sectarianism if appropriate.  <b>The story</b> of Guru Gobind Singh and the first Vaisakhi. Using the 4 pictures, the story and some flashcards, tell the story of the first Vaisakhi and the founding of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. Share what we remember  <b>Closure</b></p>	<p><b>SESSION 3</b>  <b>Gate Game</b> - read the instructions for playing this game in 'Games' in the Resources section. Think about how you will use it. This game, which 'sorts' people into categories according to gender; appearance; clothes worn etc. helps us experience what it's like to be 'grouped' together.  <b>Save the Children</b> have produced a booklet, '<b>Think of me, Think of you</b>' and another with Barnardo's entitled, '<b>Fair Play</b>' either of which you will find very useful alongside this game/discussion  <b>Flashcards</b> - for new terms - minority; majority discrimination etc and new words from the story - Khalsa etc.  <b>Vaisakhi Story</b>  Print out your copy of the Vaisakhi story and pictures from this section.</p>
<p><b>SESSION 4</b>  <b>A visitor from the Sikh Community -</b>  <b>Opening Activity</b> Welcome our visitor/s and introduce ourselves to one another.  <b>Share</b> what we know about Sikhs and the story of the first Vaisakhi with the help of puppets, pictures, flashcards etc.  <b>Wool Web</b> Pass the ball of wool around the group until everyone has received it and passed it on once. Web pattern connects everyone up. Talk about connections with one another; similarities and differences in how we celebrate events; what we have learnt from Vaisakhi about identity; co-operation; different skills and characteristics; and interdependence.</p>	<p><b>SESSION 4</b>  <b>A visitor from the Sikh Community</b> This would be a good session to have a member of the Sikh Community present so if there isn't one in the class; invite someone through the local Gurdwara. See '<b>Contacts</b>' in the Resources section. Alternatively, arrange a visit.  <b>Wool Web</b> Read the instructions for playing this game in 'Games' in the Resources section. This is an affirmation exercise as well as a closure. An evaluation can be made of the learning from this and the baseline after the first session.</p>

## THE STORY OF VAISAKHI DAY

Vaisakhi is celebrated with joyous music and dance. It is Punjab's New Year's Day. It falls on April 13, though once in 36 years it occurs on April 14th. The Sikhs celebrate this festival as a collective birthday of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, who founded the Khalsa (the Sikh brotherhood) in 1699. Here is the story.

### Picture 1

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last human Guru of Sikh's, called together a huge crowd of over 50,000 Sikhs to join him for a meeting on Vaisakhi Day, March 30, 1699. When all were expecting to hear words of comfort and consolation from the lips of their Guru, they were troubled to see him with a drawn sword in his hand and crying, ' If there is anyone here who would lay down their lives, dedicate themselves to God, defend their faith and care for the poor and the helpless, let them come forward.' There was a big silence, but the Guru went on repeating his demand. Twice more the Guru issued his invitation to the crowd. Then one man came forward. Guru Gobind Singh took him into his tent. After a while he came out by himself and in his hand was a sword apparently covered in blood! The crowd gasped and started to disperse. Then the Guru asked again and amazingly another man stepped forward and went into the tent with the Guru. Yet again the Guru came out of the tent alone, with blood on his sword. Another man stepped forward and went into the tent, and then another. When a fifth man stepped forward and went into the tent with the Guru, the crowd wondered how many men must die.

### Picture 2

The fifth time to everyone's joy, the Guru came out of the tent with his sword and the five men walking behind him, still alive! 'This was a test,' the Guru explained, 'to see who was brave and willing enough to dedicate themselves to God, to defend their faith and to care for the poor.' The Guru, after dressing the five in handsome clothes, brought them from the assembly. They were then knighted as Singh's, as the Five beloved ones or the *Panje Pyare* (Panje means Five and Pyare means beloved ones), the first members of the Order of the Khalsa (Sikh).

### Picture 3

The Guru put water in a bowl for sprinkling over the five in a simple initiation ceremony, said prayers and stirred the water with a short steel sword symbolising the need for strength. The Guru's wife, Mata Sundri, also placed some sugar crystals into the holy water or *amrit* as a reminder that strength must always be balanced by sweetness of temperament. After completing his prayers, the Guru sprinkled the *amrit* over the five. He asked them to give him some of the *amrit* too to show that although he was the Guru all people were equal in God's eyes. That day *amrit* was given to people in the crowd who said that they believed in one God, and that all people were equal. In a move to end social divisions the five dropped their surnames, that linked to caste or occupation, and were given new last names to show that they now belonged to one big family - women were given the name *Kaur* meaning 'princess' to emphasise dignity and men were given the name *Singh*, which means lion, a reminder of the need for courage. The Guru declared the five to be the first members of a new community of equals, to be called the *Khalsa* which would defend the Sikh faith and care for the poor and helpless, whoever they were and whatever they believed. They were to be dedicated to the service of others and the pursuit of justice for all people of all faiths

### Picture 4

The Panje Pyare or beloved five were asked to wear five distinctive symbols of their new identity:-

- Kes - uncut hair
- Kanga - a small comb in the hair, a reminder of the importance of cleanliness
- Kara - a steel bracelet, a reminder of a link to God and godly ideals
- Kirpan - a sword for self-defense and the protection of the weak
- Kaccha - a modest and specially designed cotton undergarment

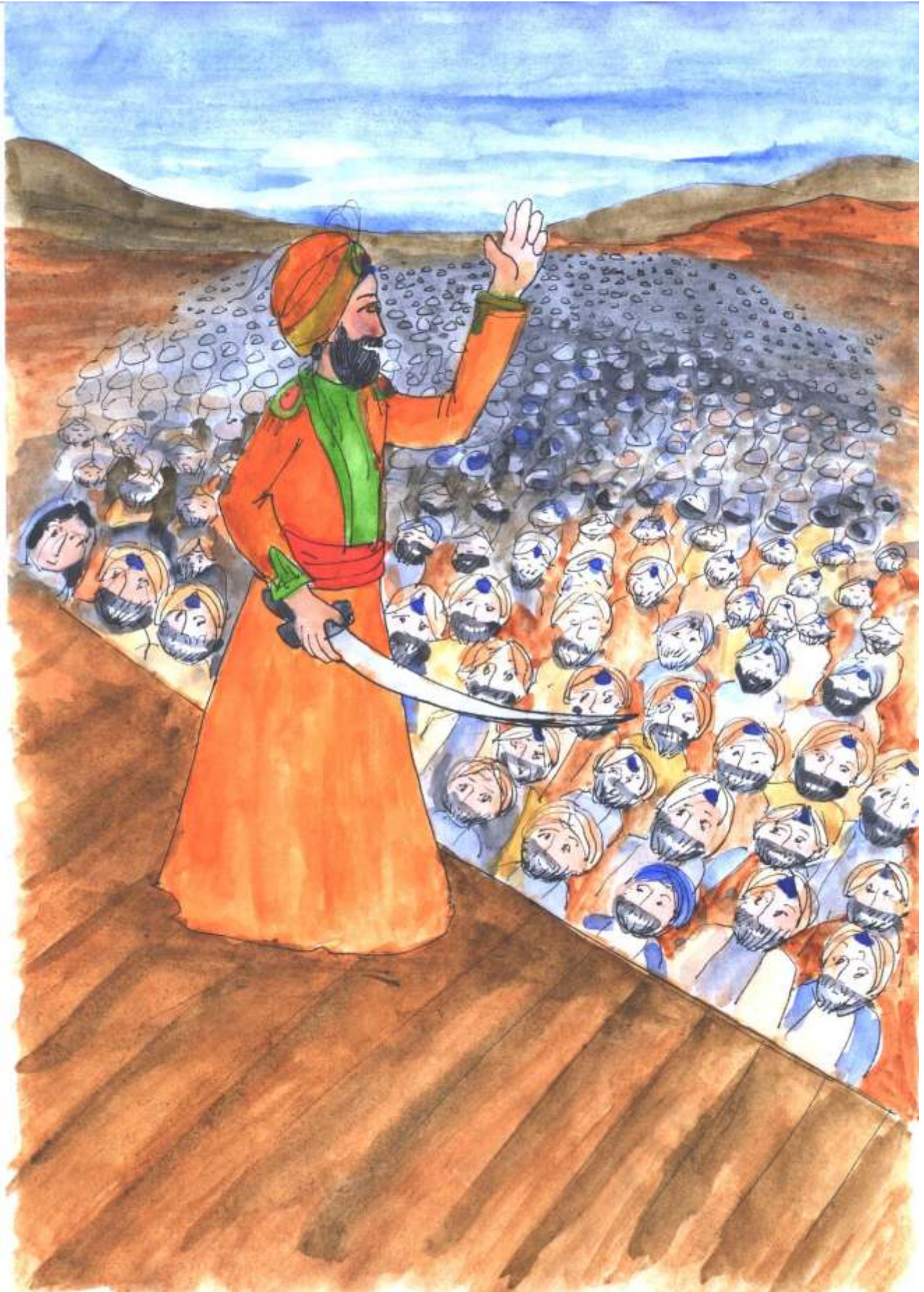
From this time, people have gathered in Gurdwaras (temples) on Vaisakhi Day, usually 13<sup>th</sup> April. A new Sikh flag is put in place and the flag pole washed. There are shared meals called *Langar* and celebrations. Sikhs have their own holy scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*. Written, composed, and compiled by the Sikh Gurus themselves, the *Guru Granth Sahib* serves as the ultimate source of spiritual guidance for Sikhs. Men and women from 16 or 18 years of age can be initiated

into the Khalsa. A baptised Sikh must observe and follow a strict code of conduct, as a sign of their commitment to follow the Sikh way of life. They must:

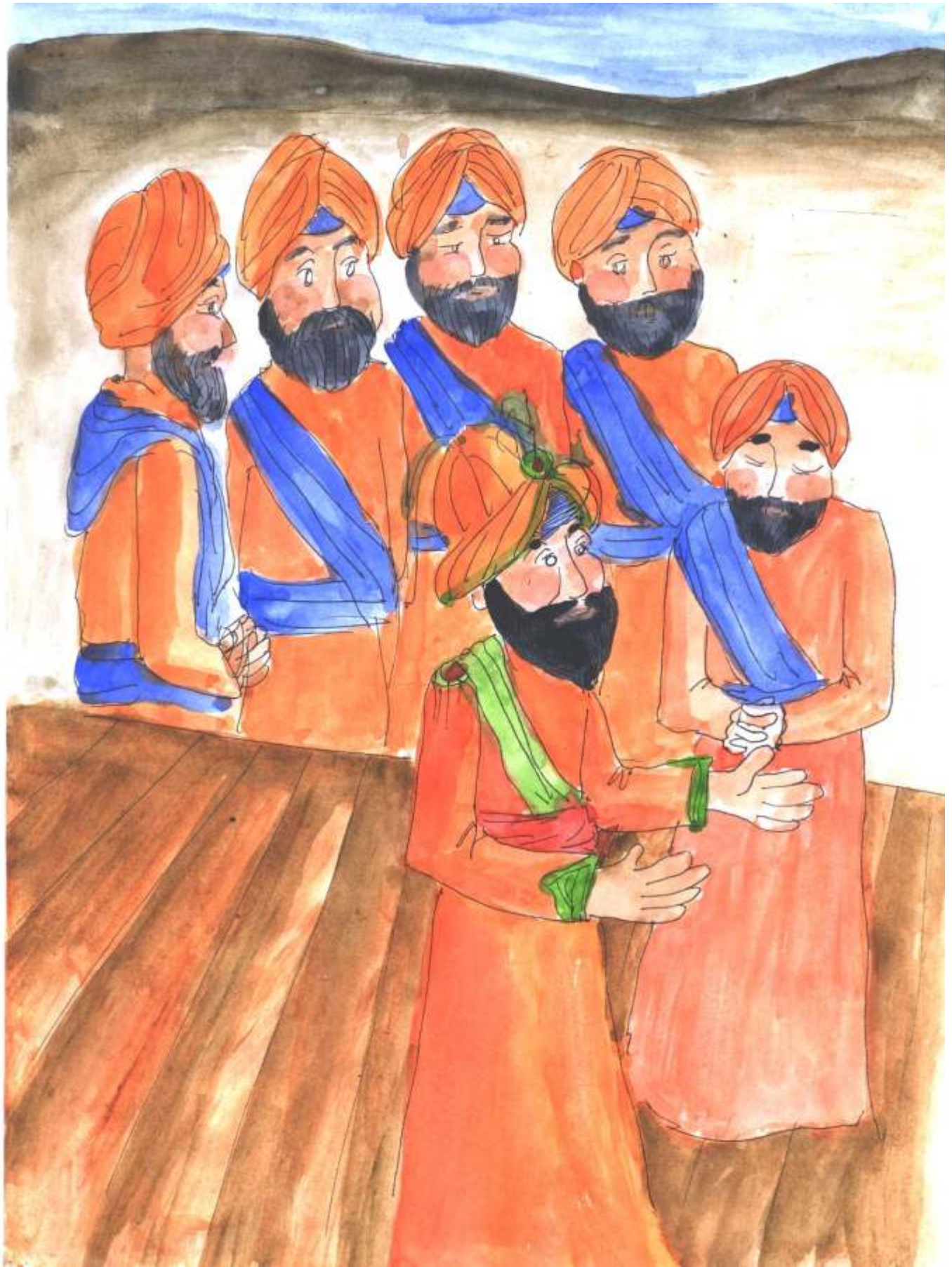
- worship only one God
- recite five prescribed banis (hymns) everyday
- learn the Punjabi language and read Guru Granth Sahib
- wear and observe the significance of five Ks
- live a truthful life and treat all humans as equal

Think about what we are devoted to. What would we give for it? Is it worth being devoted to? Will it bring happiness? Will it last? Will it help people?

# The Vaisakhi Story











# The Five K's

Kanga - A wooden comb to properly groom the hair as a symbol of cleanliness.



Kes - Uncut hair and beard, as given by God. To sustain him or her. The turban is like a crown of spirituality.

Kara - The wristband is a sign of restraint. A simple band, it indicates that the wearer is a devotee of the Guru, and reminds the wearer to hold to the truth and be free of material things.

Kaccha - A modest and specially designed cotton undergarment.

Kirpan - The sword is an emblem of courage and defence. The Khalsa is committed to defend the fine line of truth.



Belfast Gurdwara - outside



Belfast Gurdwara - inside the Temple



Sikh Flags



The Khanda





Pictures of the Gurus in the Temple