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Extend Holiday Greetings Through Diverse Stamps

High-resolution images of the stamps are available for media use only by emailing roy.a.betts@usps.gov

WASHINGTON — This year's holiday stamps extend diverse greetings. The 44-cent First-Class stamps include *Christmas: Madonna and Sleeping Child by Sassoferrato*, *Eid*, *Hanukkah*, *Kwanzaa* and *Winter Holidays*.

The stamps are available at the world's largest Post Office that never closes: www.usps.com/shop. Customers can also purchase stamps by calling 1-800-STAMP-24 or by visiting their local Post Office.

"We hope Americans will use these stamps to spread the joy of the holidays on cards and letters across the nation this holiday season," said David Failor, U.S. Postal Service executive director of Stamp Services.



Christmas: Madonna and Sleeping Child by Sassoferrato

Since 1978, the theme of each "traditional" Christmas stamp has been the Madonna and Child. The 2009 stamp features a painting by Italian artist Giovanni Battista Salvi (1609-1685), more commonly known as Sassoferrato. The painting is currently in the collection of Hearst Castle in California.

The painting depicts a blonde Madonna clothed in red and cradling the sleeping Christ Child in purple cloth. From each of the two top corners, the childlike face of a cherub looks down from the clouds. All 600 million, 44-cent, First-Class stamps are available in booklets of 20.



Eid

The Postal Service continues its annual reissuance of the *Eid* stamp in the original design that was first issued in 2001.

This stamp commemorates the two most important festivals — or eids — in the Islamic calendar: Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, and features the Arabic phrase “Eid mubarak” in gold calligraphy on a blue background. Eid mubarak translates literally as “blessed festival,” and can be paraphrased “May your religious holiday be blessed.”

Employing traditional methods and instruments to create this design, calligrapher Mohamed Zakariya of Arlington, VA, working under the direction of Phil Jordan of Falls Church, VA, chose a script known in Arabic as “thuluth” and in Turkish as “sulus.” Zakariya used homemade black ink in pens crafted from seasoned reeds from the Near East and Japanese bamboo from Hawaii. The paper was specially prepared with a coating of starch and three coats of alum and egg-white varnish, then burnished with an agate stone and aged for more than a year.

Zakariya’s black-and-white design was then colorized by computer. The colors chosen for the stamp — gold script on a blue background — are reminiscent of great works of Islamic calligraphy. All 20 million stamps are available in sheets of 20.



Hanukkah

The new 2009 Hanukkah design features a photograph of a menorah with nine lit candles. The menorah was designed by Lisa Regan of the Garden Deva Sculpture Company in Tulsa, OK, and photographed by Ira Wexler of Braddock Heights, MD. Carl T. Herrman of North Las Vegas, NV, was the art director. All 35 million stamps are available in sheets of 20.

The 2009 *Hanukkah* stamp is the third U.S. issuance to commemorate the holiday. In 1996, the Postal Service issued its first *Hanukkah* stamp, which featured a stylized illustration of a menorah. A design featuring an ornate dreidel followed in 2004.



Kwanzaa

A non-religious holiday taking place over seven days — December 26 to January 1 — Kwanzaa draws on African traditions and takes its name from the phrase for “first fruits” in Swahili, a widely spoken African language. Stamp artist Lloyd McNeill of New York City, under the direction of Carl T. Herrman, created this new, festive, symbolic design to celebrate the holiday.

The bold colors in the stamp art are complemented in the top right corner by the colors of the Kwanzaa flag — green for growth, red for blood, and black for the African people — the same colors as the Pan-African flag. The field of green around the borders symbolizes growth and a bountiful harvest. In the hoop that the girl holds in her hands, as well as in the family grouping of mother, father, and child, McNeill symbolized unity. This is the third stamp design the Postal Service has issued in celebration of Kwanzaa. The first was issued in 1997. Thirty million 44-cent First-Class stamps are available in sheets of 20.



Winter Holidays

A reindeer, snowman, gingerbread man and toy soldier highlight the 2009 *Winter Holidays* stamps. These popular figures are seen throughout the holidays, decorating homes, schools, and stores from Thanksgiving to New Year’s. They also appear in gift wrap designs and are the subjects of several favorite songs and stories. As stamp art, they will add a festive touch to letters and cards sent to friends and family.

This is the first Postal Service stamp project for artist Joseph Cudd. His company, Brushworks Studio, in Greensboro, NC, is primarily a gift wrap and print design firm. To create these stamps under the direction of Richard Sheaff of Scottsdale, AZ, Cudd first sketched the designs by hand and then finished them on the computer using a graphics tablet. More than 1.5 billion 44-cent First-Class stamps are available in booklets of 20 and ATM booklets of 18.

Philatelic Products

Visit www.usps.com/shop and type the stamp name into the search engine to purchase the following items.

Christmas: Madonna and Sleeping Child by Sassoferrato

- 678661, First-Day Cover, 82 cents.
- 678691, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.
- 678693, First-Day Cover Keepsake with booklet, \$9.62.

Eid

- 573661, First-Day Cover, 82 cents
- 842090, Eid Customized Postage, \$20.95

Hanukkah

- 573561, First-Day Cover, 82 cents
- 573591, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.
- 573593, Cancellation Keepsake (First-Day Cover w/pane), \$9.62.

Kwanzaa

- 573461, First-Day Cover, 82 cents
- 573491, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.
- 573493, Cancellation Keepsake (w/pane), \$9.62.

Winter Holidays

- 573763, ATM Booklet First-Day Cover Set of 4, \$3.28.
- 678563, Booklet First-Day Cover Set of 4, \$3.28.
- 678568, Booklet Digital Color Postmark Set of 4, \$6.
- 678591, Ceremony Program w/4 stamps, \$6.95.
- 678599, Cancellation Keepsake (4 Digital Color Postmark covers w/booklet), \$14.80.
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Visit the Postal Service's interactive holiday press room at www.usps.com/news.

For holiday mailing reminders and shipping tips, follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/holidayshipping.

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