Christmas

In support of Vanderbilt staff, students, faculty and postdocs, this information is offered as a resource about the observance of the Christian holiday of Christmas.

HISTORY AND MEANING
Christmas is a Christian holiday that celebrates the virgin birth of Jesus. Jesus is held as the Messiah, and his teachings and eventual death and resurrection are at the core of the Christian faith. Though the exact date of his birth is not known, the church set the celebration on December 25 as that was the date used for winter solstice holidays in the Roman Empire. Different practices from other solstice holidays from across Europe have also been incorporated over the years. This holiday is quite popular in many parts of the world, especially in the West, where it often receives cultural primacy over other holidays in this season.

TYPICAL OBSERVANCES
• This holiday is celebrated with re-creations of the scene of Jesus’ nativity, the singing of religious carols, and the giving of gifts. These gifts are placed under a decorated tree that is kept in the house and in decorative stockings that are hung by the fireplace. Gift giving is often seen as the main activity of the holiday.
• Churches hold special services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to commemorate the importance of Jesus and his teachings.
• A feast is often held on Christmas as well and is an important part of the tradition of bringing together family members on this day who do not often see each other.

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING THE VANDERBILT COMMUNITY
• Do not assume that everyone celebrates Christmas. This is an assumption made often in the United States, and it is not respectful of other faiths and cultures and their holidays happening during this season.
• Communication is key. Ask how you can support observances.
• Because Christmas and the winter break holidays overlap, scheduling essential employees’ time off will need attention.

RESOURCES FOR MANAGING WELL-BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH
People feel many types of emotions during the holidays—joy, peace, stress and depression, to name a few. Whatever you feel, know you are not alone, and Vanderbilt has resources to help you through these challenges.

Faculty, Staff and Postdocs
Work/Life Connections–EAP
(615) 936-1327
vumc.org/health-wellness/work-life

Students
Office of Student Care Coordination
(615) 343-9355
vanderbilt.edu/carecoordination