HISTORY AND MEANING
This Christian holiday is a holy day of obligation in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions that celebrates the birth of Jesus. The life teachings and eventual death and resurrection of Jesus Christ form the core of the Christian faith. His birth is a highly important time of the year and is celebrated across the Christian faith. The Roman Catholic Church uses the Gregorian calendar and observes this holiday in December. The Eastern Orthodox Church, which uses the old Julian calendar, celebrates this holiday in January.

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING THE VANDERBILT COMMUNITY
- Those observing this holiday, which could last as long as three days, may be fasting during parts of the day, which should be respected.
- Communication is key. Ask how you can support observances.
- Students are not automatically excused from class for this holiday. Graduate and professional students must refer to their own school and departmental vacation policies and calendar for more specific information.
- Staff members may request paid time off to celebrate. Support their preference to take leave for their religious observance.

TYPICAL OBSERVANCES
- Orthodox celebrations of this holiday can include observances such as special church services, singing, and re-creating the nativity scene.
- In this tradition, celebrations are held over the course of three days, during which time practitioners may fast and feast.
- In some areas, there are other traditions, such as burning a Yule log to symbolize Jesus’ birth into this world.
- In some cultures, this holiday is combined with Epiphany, held on the previous day.

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

This resource is part of a toolkit created by Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to highlight religious and cultural observances that members of our community may practice. This toolkit is not meant to be exhaustive, but instead to provide a general overview of how we can support staff, faculty and students. We continually refine this information and welcome your suggestions.

For more information or to provide feedback, contact Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at edi@vanderbilt.edu. For information on the university’s policy on religious holy days and observances, contact the Office of the University Chaplain and Religious Life at religiouslife@vanderbilt.edu or Human Resources at human.resources@vanderbilt.edu.