Jehovah’s Witnesses
Observance of the Memorial of Jesus Christ’s Death

In support of our staff, students, faculty and postdocs, this information is offered as a resource about the Christian observance of the Jehovah’s Witnesses Observance of the Memorial of Jesus Christ’s Death.

APRIL 19, 2019

HISTORY AND MEANING

Jehovah’s Witnesses consider themselves to be Christian and as such recognize that Jesus Christ is the son of God and commemorate the Memorial of Jesus’ death. The purposes of the Memorial evening meal are to remember Jesus and show gratitude for the sacrifice that he made on behalf of humanity. This Memorial is also known as the Lord’s Supper, the Last Supper or the Lord’s Evening Meal.

Jesus began the Lord’s Evening Meal on the date of the Jewish Passover, and he died later that same day. Scriptures compare Jesus’ sacrifice to that of the Passover lamb in the Jewish observance of Passover.

Because Jesus began the Lord’s Evening Meal on Passover and Passover was observed on a yearly basis, Jehovah’s Witnesses have an annual celebration of the Memorial based on the calendar that was used by the Jews at that time. This means that the Memorial is held after sunset, which was the beginning of the Jewish day, on the occurrence of the first full moon after the spring equinox. The Memorial includes a talk on the meaning of the celebration and a sharing of unadulterated red wine and unleavened bread by those who have been chosen to rule with Christ in heaven. It is believed that the bread symbolizes the body that Jesus Christ gave on behalf of humanity, and the wine symbolizes the blood that redeems us from sin.
Jehovah's Witnesses
Observance of the Memorial of Jesus Christ's Death

TYPICAL OBSERVANCES

• This is a very special day for Jehovah's Witnesses. It is expected that the Memorial celebration will be attended by all those active as Jehovah's Witnesses in addition to those who have shown interest in learning more about their teachings.

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING THE VANDERBILT COMMUNITY

• Ask community members in observance how they can be supported.
• While students are not automatically excused from class for this observance, they may work with their course instructors to make accommodations. Graduate and professional students must refer to their own school and departmental vacation policies and calendars for more specific information.
• Staff members may request paid time off for this observance. Support their preference to take leave for their religious observance.

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, students and postdocs. We continually refine this information and welcome your suggestions.

For more information, please contact Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at edi@vanderbilt.edu. For more 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.

Vanderbilt University is committed to principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action. Vanderbilt® and the Vanderbilt logos are registered trademarks of The Vanderbilt University. © 2019 Vanderbilt University. All rights reserved.