Qingming Festival

In support of our staff, students, faculty and postdocs, this information is offered as a resource about the Chinese observance of the Qingming Festival, also known as Tomb-sweeping Day.

APRIL 5, 2019

HISTORY AND MEANING

The Qingming or Ching Ming Festival is a traditional Chinese festival celebrated on the first day of the fifth solar month. The Qingming Festival started over 2,500 years ago during the Zhou Dynasty. Emperors would offer sacrifices in honor of their ancestors in exchange for wealth, peace and good harvests for the country. In 732, Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty stated respect must be paid at ancestors’ graves. Over time, this developed into the tomb-sweeping tradition.

TYPICAL OBSERVANCES

- The most popular activity of the Qingming Festival is tomb sweeping, when family members honor their ancestors by visiting their tombs and offering food, tea, wine and incense. It is customary to sweep the tomb, remove all weeds and add fresh soil. Some also put willow branches on the tomb to protect the ancestor from evil spirits.
- It is also traditional to wear willow branches and place them on gates and front doors to ward off evil spirits.
- Kite flying is a common activity enjoyed by all, either in the day or in the evening. In the evening, lanterns are tied to the end of the kites.
- Sweet green rice balls are one of the traditional foods eaten during the Qingming Festival. Other foods include peach blossom porridge, crispy cakes (called sazi or hanju), Qingming snails and eggs.

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING THE VANDERBILT COMMUNITY

- Ask those in observance how they can be supported and encouraged.
- 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/

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