Lunar New Year

In support of our staff, students, faculty and postdocs, this information is offered as a resource about the observance of the Lunar New Year.

FEB. 5, 2019

HISTORY AND MEANING

The Lunar New Year can be a secular, religious or cultural celebration. It is often associated with East Asian traditions. The Lunar New Year is the first day of the month of the lunar calendar. It kicks off the 15-day Spring Festival that marks the end of winter. At the end of the Spring Festival is the Lantern Festival, a community time of celebration when children carry lanterns in parades and fireworks are set off.

Traditionally, the New Year and New Year’s Eve remain family-oriented. They are special times to remember one’s ancestors. On New Year’s Eve, dinner may be arranged for ancestors as a way to give thanks for the foundation they have given the family. Gifts may be exchanged, and children often receive money from their parents in red envelopes.

TYPICAL OBSERVANCES

• Traditional foods with significance are served, including whole chickens, uncut noodles, fish and sweet delicacies.
• Decorations include plum blossoms, platters of oranges and tangerines, and candy. Couplets or good wishes are written on red paper and hung in the home.
• A form of “spring cleaning” is done to sweep away ill fortune.
• Gifts are exchanged with family and friends.

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING THE VANDERBILT COMMUNITY

• Employees may enjoy a New Year’s celebration by sharing foods and customs.
• While students are not automatically excused from class for this observance, they may work with their faculty members 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 and students. 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 & Religious Life, at religiouslife@vanderbilt.edu or Human Resources at human.resources@vanderbilt.edu.

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