Taoist Festival Honoring the Shen of Water, East and Spring

In support of our staff, students, faculty and postdocs, this information is offered as a resource about the Taoist observance of the Taoist Festival Honoring the Shen of Water, East and Spring.

MARCH 21, 2019

HISTORY AND MEANING
The Taoist Festival Honoring the Shen of Water, East and Spring, also known as the spring equinox, marks the equal length of night and day. At this time, Taoists pray for growth, seek enlightenment and live in harmony with nature. In Chinese thought, spring is associated with the color green (particularly a green dragon) and the direction east (the direction of the sunrise).

TYPICAL OBSERVANCES
• Taoists stand facing east to honor the direction as it relates to spring.
• It is common to plant a garden with sprouting greens.
• An ancient traditional game involves trying to stand an egg upright. It is believed that if you can make an egg stand upright, you will have good luck.
• It is common to eat spring/seasonal vegetables, which are thought to keep one healthy.

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING THE VANDERBILT COMMUNITY
• 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 member 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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