

# VCU interfaith holiday calendar 2023

The VCU interfaith holiday calendar lists traditional holidays from various world religions. Holidays marked with an asterisk (\*) typically begin and end at sundown on the dates listed. In an effort to celebrate diversity in the university community, please keep these dates in mind when scheduling university-sponsored events. If you have questions about this calendar, contact VCU HR at [askhr@vcu.edu](mailto:askhr@vcu.edu) or call 804-828-0177.

## January 2023

Jan. 1: Mary Mother of God - Roman Catholic

Celebrated on the Octave (eighth day) of Christmas, this day commemorates Mary, who gave birth to Christ.

Jan. 5: Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti - Sikh

Commemorates the birth of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru of Sikhism.

Jan. 6: Epiphany - Protestant, Roman Catholic, Greek (Eastern) Orthodox

Commemorates the visit of the Magi to the Christ child.

Jan. 7: Christmas - Orthodox Christian

Commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ.

Jan. 13: Lohri/Maghi - Sikh

Marks the end of winter and the celebration of harvest.

Jan. 15: Pongal/Uttarayan/Makar Sankranti - Hindu

Commemorates the arrival of spring, harvest and thanks to the Sun God.

Jan. 19: Epiphany - Orthodox Christian

Commemorates the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River.

Jan. 22: Chinese New Year - Buddhist

Commemorates the first day of the Chinese lunar calendar.

## February 2023

Feb. 1: Imbolc - Pagan\*

Commemorates the beginning of spring and is celebrated at the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox.

Feb. 5-6: Tu B'Shvat - Jewish

Celebrates a connection to the Earth and environment.

Feb. 15: Parinirvana (Nirvana Day) - Buddhist

Commemorates the day that the Buddha achieved enlightenment and his soul released from his body.

Feb. 22: Ash Wednesday/Lent begins - Protestant, Roman Catholic

Marks the beginning of six weeks of penitence, often marked by various forms of abstinence and/or fasting.

Feb. 26 - Mar. 1: Ayyam-i-Ha - Baha'i

Dedicated to socializing, being hospitable, giving to the poor and needy, and preparing for the upcoming month of fasting.

### **March 2023**

Mar. 2-20: Nineteen-day Fast - Baha'i\*

An obligatory sunup to sundown fast for 19 days, occurring in the last month of the Baha'i calendar. It serves to reinvigorate the soul and bring one closer to God.

March 6-7: Purim - Jewish\*

Celebrates the day Esther, Queen of Persia, saved the Jewish people.

March 6: Magha Puja Day - Buddhist

Commemorates the first gathering between the Buddha and his first disciples and celebrates the creation of an ideal and exemplary community.

Mar. 8: Holi - Hindu

A celebration to welcome in spring and seen as a new beginning where people can start fresh and release their inhibitions.

Mar. 8-10: Hola Mohalla - Sikh

A gathering of Sikhs for military exercises and mock battles on the day following the festival of Holi at Anandpur Sahib.

March 20: Ostara - Pagan\*

Commemorates the spring equinox, when light overcomes darkness and the promises of Imbolc are fulfilled.

March 21: Naw-Ruz - Baha'i, Zoroastrian

Commemorates the Persian New Year celebrated by various ethnic and religious communities, including Parsis, Ismaili Muslims and members of the Baha'i faith.

Mar. 23 - April 20: Ramadan - Muslim\*

One of the five pillars of Islam, this is a month of fasting, prayer, reflection and community that commemorates Muhammad's first revelation.

### **April 2023**

April 2: Palm Sunday - Protestant, Roman Catholic  
Commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

April 4: Mahavir Jayanti (the birth of Mahavir) - Jain  
Commemorates the birth of Mahavir Swami, the 24th and last spiritual teacher born of Jainism.

April 6-13: Passover - Jewish\*  
Commemorates the exodus of Jewish people from Egypt.

April 6: Holy Thursday - Roman Catholic  
Holy Thursday, the first day of the Easter Triduum, commemorates Christ's Passion.

April 7: Good Friday - Protestant, Roman Catholic  
Commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ at Calvary.

April 8: Holy Saturday - Roman Catholic  
Commemorates the 40-hour vigil that followers of Jesus Christ held after his death and burial on Good Friday and before his resurrection on Easter Sunday.

April 9: Easter - Protestant, Roman Catholic  
Commemorates Jesus Christ's resurrection.

April 9: Palm Sunday - Orthodox Christian  
Marks the beginning of Holy Week, commemorating the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem.

April 14: Vaisakhi - Sikh  
Commemorates the spring harvest and the formation of the Khalsa panth of warriors under Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

April 14: Great Friday - Eastern Orthodox Christian  
Commemorates the death of Christ on the Cross.

April 16: Easter - Eastern Orthodox Christian  
A feast day commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

April 18: Yom HaSho'ah - Jewish\*  
Also known as Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day, this day commemorates the approximately six million Jewish people who perished in the Holocaust.

April 21 - May 2: Ridvan - Baha'i  
Celebrates the anniversary of the declaration of prophethood by Baha'u'llah.  
April 21: Eid al-Fitr - Muslim  
Marks the end of Ramadan and the beginning of a feast that breaks the fast.

April 25-26: Yom haatzmaut - Jewish\*  
Commemorates the day Israel declared independence.

## **May 2023**

May 1: Beltane - Pagan  
Commemorates the beginning of the pastoral summer season and occurs halfway between spring equinox and summer solstice.

May 5: Vesak (Buddha Day) - Buddhist  
Known as Buddha Day, this day commemorates the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death.

May 18: Ascension Day - Protestant, Roman Catholic  
Commemorates Jesus' ascension into heaven.

May 24: Declaration of the Bab - Baha'i  
The anniversary of the Bab's declaration, revealing himself as the door through which God's revelation would come.

May 23: Pentecost - Protestant, Roman Catholic  
Commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, celebrated 50 days after Easter Sunday.

May 25: Ascension Day - Orthodox  
Commemorates Jesus' ascension into heaven.

May 26: Buddha Purnima (birth of Buddha) - Buddhist  
Commemorates the birth of the Buddha.

May 26-27: Shavuot - Jewish\*  
Commemorates the feast of weeks and is celebrated seven weeks after the second Passover.

May 28: Pentecost - Eastern Orthodox Christian  
Commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, celebrated 50 days after the Great and Holy Pascha.

May 29: Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh - Baha'i  
It celebrates Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith, as well as his

## teachings. **June 2023**

June 16: Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev - Sikh  
It's the day to commemorate and celebrate the life of religious figure Guru Arjan Dev who sacrificed his life for the Sikh people.

June 21: Summer Solstice/Litha - Pagan

One of the solstices; commemorates the longest day and the shortest night of the year. This celebration marks the power of the sun.

June 26- July 1: Hajj - Muslim\*

An annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, the holiest city for Islam. Performing Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam.

June 27: Waqf al Arafa - Muslim\*

Occurring on the second day of Hajj, this day commemorates one of Muhammad's last famous sermons in his final year of life.

June 29-30: Eid al-Adha - Muslim\*

Known as the feast of sacrifice, this day commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son as an act of obedience to God. Considered one of the holiest days of Islam.

## **July 2023**

July 3: Asalha Puja Day - Buddhist

Celebrates the Buddha's first sermon in which he set out the doctrine that came to him following his enlightenment.

July 19-Aug. 17: Muharram - Muslim\*

Regarded as one of the four Islamic sacred months of the year, Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar, thereby making it the Islamic New Year. The most sacred day within this month is the Day of Ashura. It falls on the tenth day of this month and many people consider it synonymous with the month of Muharram.

July 26: Tisha B'Av - Jewish

The major day of communal mourning in the Jewish calendar.

July 28 : Ashura - Muslim\*

Ashura is the tenth day of the month of Muharram in the Islamic calendar. It marks the day that Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of Muhammad, was martyred. Ashura is an important holiday and is commemorated by Shi'a Muslims as well as a recommended day of fasting in Sunni Muslims.

## **August 2023**

Aug. 1: Lammas/Lughnasadh - Pagan

Commemorates the beginning of the harvest season and falls at the halfway point between the summer [solstice](#) and the autumnal [equinox](#).

Aug. 15: Assumption of Mary - Catholic

Commemorates the death of Mary and her bodily assumption into Heaven.

Aug. 30: Raksha Bandhan - Hindu

Popularly known as brother-sister day, this day is celebrated by the tying of a sacred thread, promising protection, obligation and care between the one who ties the thread and its recipient.

## **September 2023**

Sep. 6: Krishna Janmashtami - Hindu

Commemorates the birth of Lord Krishna, the eighth avatar of Lord Vishnu.

Sept. 11: Paryushana - Jain

This is the most important annual holy event for Jains. It involves prayers and fasting for 8 – 10 days and ends with the celebration of Kshamavani (the day of forgiveness).

Sept. 15-17: Rosh Hashanah - Jewish\*

Commemorates the Jewish New Year.

Sept. 19: Ganesh Chaturthi - Hindu

Commemorates the arrival of Lord Ganesh to earth from Kailash Parvat (Mount Kailash) with his mother Parvati.

Sept. 23: Mabon - Pagan

Commemorates the autumnal equinox, the time of year when days and nights are nearing the same length.

Sept. 24-25: Yom Kippur - Jewish\*

The Jewish day of communal and personal atonement for sins committed during the past year with prayer and fasting

Sept. 29 - Oct. 6: Sukkot - Jewish\*

Known as the festival of tabernacles and the feast of booths, this day celebrates one of Judaism's three central pilgrimage festivals, along with Passover and Shavuot.

Sept. 29: Shemini Atzeret - Jewish

Known as the eighth day of assembly, this day may be celebrated at the same time as Simchat Torah or separately to commemorate the end of one cycle and the beginning of another.

## **October 2023**

Oct. 8: Simchat Torah - Jewish

Known as rejoicing in Torah, this day may be celebrated at the same time as Shemini Atzeret or separately to commemorate the end of one cycle and the beginning of another

Oct. 15-24: Navaratri - Hindu

Literally meaning "nine nights," this is a major Hindu event that honors the divine feminine, Devi.

Oct. 24: Dussehra - Hindu

The tenth day that marks the end of Navaratri and commemorates Lord Rama's battle and victory over Ravana, exemplifying the victory of good over evil.

Oct. 31: Samhain - Pagan

Commemorates the end of the growing season and the beginning of winter. Takes place at the midpoint between fall equinox and the winter solstice.

## **November 2023**

Nov. 12: Diwali - Hindu

Spanning five days, this is one of Hinduism's most well-known holidays. Commemorates the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, knowledge over ignorance and is usually associated with the Goddess Laxmi.

Nov. 13: Vikram Samvat New Year - Hindu

Commemorates the new year based on the Hindu lunar calendar. This is the official state calendar of Nepal and also used throughout India and by practicing Hindus throughout the world.

Nov. 30: Guru Nanak Jayanti (birth of Guru Nanak) - Sikh

One of the most sacred festivals of Sikhism, this day commemorates the birth of Guru Nanak, the first guru of Sikhism.

## **December 2023**

Dec. 7-15: Hanukkah - Jewish\*

Known as the festival of lights, Hanukkah commemorates the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian Greek army, the subsequent miracle of rededicating the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and restoring its menorah.

Dec. 8: Bodhi Day - Buddhism

Commemorates the day Gautama Siddhartha attained enlightenment and became the Buddha.

Dec. 8: Immaculate Conception - Roman Catholic

Commemorates the conception of the Virgin Mary in the womb of her mother, Saint Anne.

Dec. 12: Our Lady of Guadalupe - Catholic

Commemorates the miracles of the Virgin Mary and angels in Guadalupe, Mexico.

Dec. 21: Winter Solstice/Yule - Pagan

One of the solstices, commemorates the shortest day and the longest night of the year.

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve - Protestant, Roman Catholic

Commemorates the day and night before Christmas. The two days (Christmas Eve and Christmas) together are considered some of the most culturally significant days in Christendom.

Dec. 25: Christmas Day - Protestant, Roman Catholic, Greek (Eastern) Orthodox

Commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ.

Dec. 26-Jan. 1, 2022: Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is a weeklong celebration that honors African heritage in African American culture.