



Wishing you and your family a Happy Holiday Season!!

NEWS YOU CAN USE:

Please feel free to check out this month's **2021 December Newsletter** posted on website below; <https://it.johnshopkins.edu/governance-committees-it-policies/ddi-council-marketing-events/>

The Jewish Festival of Lights

Chanukah, or Hanukkah, lasts for eight days, beginning the 25th of the Hebrew month Kislev (November-December).

**December Recognition for this month is:
Religious and Cultural Observance**

- 21 Dongzhi Festival
- 21 Yalda (Winter Solstice)
- 21- 1/1 [Yule](#)
- 23- HumanLight
- 25 Christmas Day Christian
- 26-1/1 Kwanzaa

Merry-land Festivities in Maryland link below:

<https://www.visitmaryland.org/list/merry-land-holiday-festivities>

Giving for the holidays: Donate or Volunteer at the Holidays with United Way (uwcm.org) <https://hr.jhu.edu/benefits-worklife/community-engagement/>

Holiday Song Playlist:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0AetwBSMAUhKiwi2ATwqga?si=881640d9b8f340dc>



- **21 Dongzhi Festival**

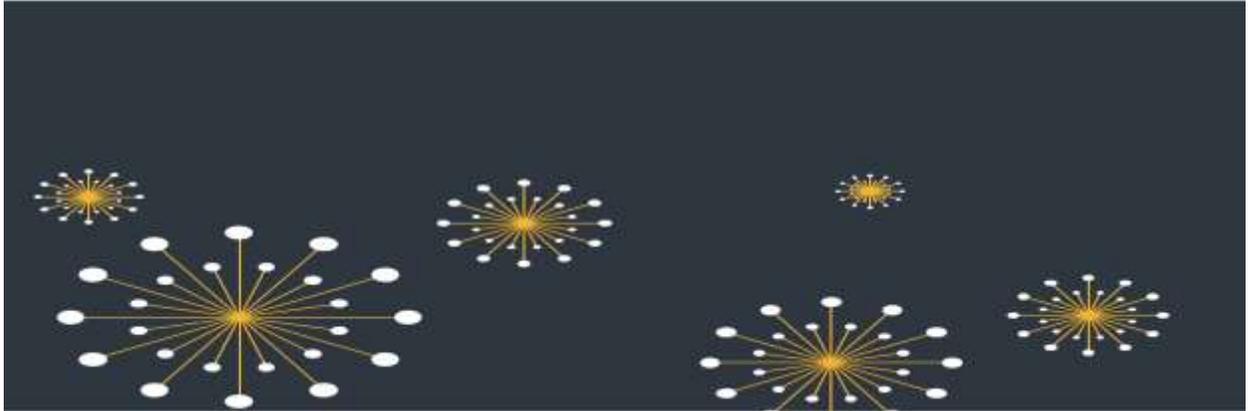
History and Meaning: The Dongzhi Festival celebrates the turning point of winter. It is common for families to gather and enjoy a hearty, warming meal. This is a harmonious balance of yin and yang energy; the dark cold night and the impending sunlight and warmth of delicious food. The festival started during the Han dynasty (202 B.C.-220 A.D.). The day was devoted to worshipping heaven and praying at the tombs of ancestors.
Relevant Observances: • Observers enjoy tang yuan, sweet round rice balls typically filled with sesame or red bean paste and served in ginger broth. Other traditional foods enjoyed during the celebration are dumplings, won ton and mutton. • It is important to share a lavish meal with family on this day

- **21 Yalda (Winter Solstice)**

- History and Meaning: During the Yalda festival, Iranians celebrate the coming of winter, renewal of the sun and victory of light over darkness. It is the longest night of the year. “Yalda” is a Syriac word meaning “birth,” and the festival celebrates the eve of the birth of Mithra, the sun god. Family members and close friends gather at the eldest family member’s home to pass the long night and protect themselves from lurking evils. They eat, drink, and read Hafez until after midnight. The rising sun represents the victory of light over darkness and good over evil.

21-1/1 (Yule)

History and Meaning: The winter solstice (Yule) is the longest night of the year. It marks the beginning of the dark half surrendering to the light half—each following day the sun stays out a little longer. Upon sunrise of the longest night of the year, the sun is said to be reborn. A common practice is the burning of a Yule log. This tradition dates back to when the Norsemen believed the sun was a ball of fire that rolled back to Earth around the winter solstice. Once the log was burned, the ashes were spread around the house to protect the family



23 - HumanLight

History and Meaning HumanLight is a humanist holiday celebrated annually on Dec. 23. The New Jersey Humanist Network established it in 2001 to support secular people commemorating the holiday season and creating their own meaningful traditions that are not rooted in religious practices. Many secular organizations and individuals began to observe HumanLight after its inception in 2001. It celebrates the positive and secular human values of reason, compassion, humanity and hope, and it envisions a happy, peaceful world built by people working together. The name HumanLight was chosen to signify humanity and “light” — the light of human reason.

25 - Christmas Day

Christmas is celebrated on December 25 and is both a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. For two millennia, people around the world have been observing it with traditions and practices that are both religious and secular in nature. Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a spiritual leader whose teachings form the basis of their religion. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, of course, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. December 25— Christmas Day—has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870.

<https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas>

History and Meaning Advent is an important period of the liturgical year for many Western traditions of Christianity. The degree to which it is acknowledged and celebrated varies—it is observed most prominently in Roman Catholicism and mainline Protestant traditions (Lutherans, Methodists, Episcopalians, etc.). The season lasts for approximately a month, always beginning the fourth Sunday before Christmas day. The first day is known by many observers as Advent Sunday. It marks the beginning of a period of waiting for the birth of Jesus and the beginning of the liturgical year. In Eastern Christian traditions (Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Eastern Catholic, etc.), this time of year is known as the Nativity Fast. Beginning on Nov. 15 and lasting through Dec. 24, the observance is a combination of fasting interspersed with special feast days. Unlike

Western Christianity, this not the beginning of the liturgical year, which is September. In all Christian traditions that observe either Advent or the Nativity Fast, the season is one of penitence and hopeful anticipation. It is a time to anticipate the celebration of the birth of the Messiah (Jesus) and Christ's return, which is yet to come.

26–1/1 **Kwanzaa**

History and Meaning Kwanzaa is a unique African-American celebration focusing on the traditional African values of family, community, responsibility, commerce and self-improvement. Kwanzaa is neither political nor religious, and despite some misconceptions, it is not a substitute for Christmas. It is a time of reaffirming African-American people, their ancestors and culture. Kwanzaa was first celebrated in 1965. Kwanzaa celebrates Nguzo Saba, or the Seven Principles of African heritage. These principles are: • Umoja (unity) • Kujichagulia (self-determination) • Ujima (collective work and responsibility) • Ujamaa (collective economics) • Nia (purpose) • Kuumba (creativity) • Imani (faith)

<https://it.johnshopkins.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021-multicultural-calendar.pdf>

Kwanzaa was founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana “Ron” Karenga, a college professor and African American leader. He studied the festivals of many African groups of people and decided that the new holiday should be a harvest or “first fruits.” Kwanzaa is a Kiswahili word meaning “the first fruits of the harvest.”

The Jewish Festival of Lights

Chanukah, or Hanukkah, lasts for eight days, beginning the 25th of the Hebrew month Kislev (November-December). It celebrates the victory of Judah the Maccabee over the Syrian tyrant Antiochus over 2100 years ago.

In 165BC, after three years of war, Judah won a decisive victory over the Syrians and returned with his followers to Jerusalem to reclaimed the Temple. On their return, they could find only one small cruse of oil, enough to last one day. But when they lit the temple menorah with it, a miracle occurred and the menorah burned for eight days. Since then, the Jewish people celebrated the success of the Maccabees and the miracle of the oil.

Each night of the festival, the family gathers around the menorah, a special candelabrum that holds eight candles. On the first night the head of the family uses a helper candle – called a shamos – to light one candle. On the second night, two candles are lit, and so on, until all eight candles are lit on the eighth night. Each night, gifts are given. In some families, children play games with a small four-sided wooden top called a dreidel. On each side of the top is one letter of NGHS, or Nes Godol Hoyoh Shom, which means “A great miracle happened there.” Hanukkah means “dedication.”



The menorah is lit during Hanukkah

The Jewish Festival of Lights, [Hanukkah](#), begins the 25th of Kislev (November – December)

Islam

Muslims around the world celebrate Ramadan, which marks the month the prophet Mohammed is believed to have had their holy book, the Koran, revealed to him by God. Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, being 11 to 12 days shorter than the Gregorian calendar.

The celebration starts at the first sighting of the moon in Ramadan. This year, Ramadan happens to fall over the Christmas period.

Muslims cannot eat and drink at all in the daytime during this period, breaking their fast only when the sun sets and again before the sun rises, sharing special Ramadan treats, such as Konafa, an Egyptian dessert made of shredded wheat and syrup, or Katayef, sweets stuffed with nuts. They also eat dates (iftar) which, according to Islamic teachings, were eaten by Mohammed at the end of each day of the fasting month. The days are spent in prayer and reflection.

The fast ends with the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, the festival of the breaking of the fast. Some Muslim governments grant amnesties to political and other prisoners on this day.

Hindu

The 25th December also is considered to be the birthday of the Hindu god, Krishna, as well as Mithra, the Greek god of light.

Wicca

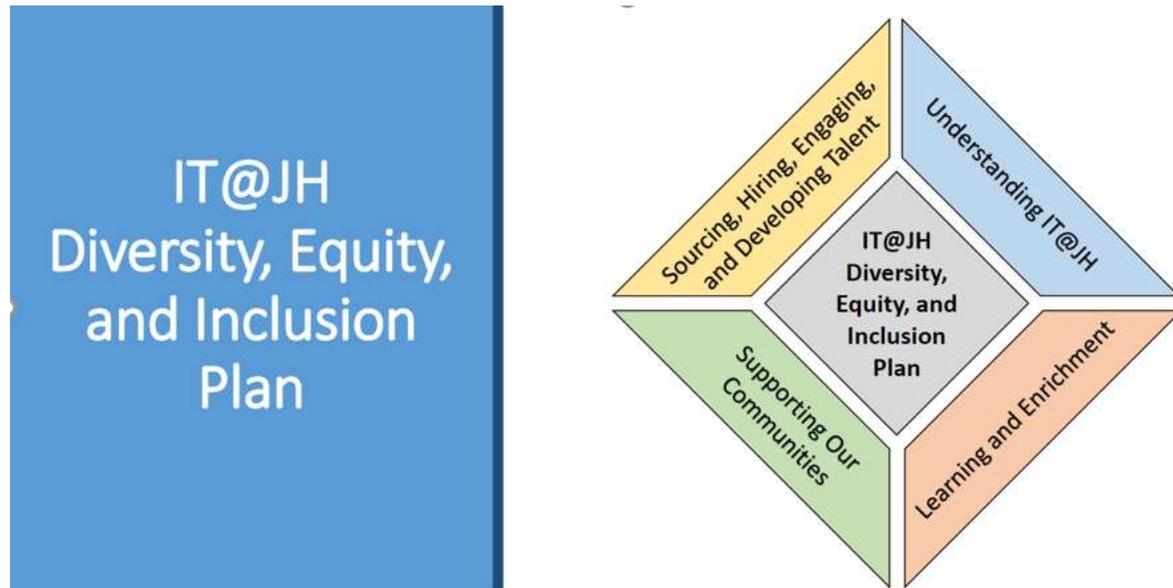
The annual Tree Festival, which had long been celebrated in Northern Europe before the Christian era, is still celebrated among nature-based faiths such as Wicca.

<https://didyouknow.org/christmas/celebrations/>

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/diversity/resources/cultural-materials/religious-cultural-observances.html>

Happy Holidays from the IT_DDI Council

IT@JH Development, Diversity, & Inclusion (DDI) Council



[IT@JH Diversity Website](#) link to website to view the work of IT&JH_DDI Council

Join a Committee:

The council has four committees to help accomplish its mission: 1) Recruitment and Retention, 2) Education and Training, 3) Institutional Equity, and 4) [Marketing and Events](#).

View a [video overview](#) of the Diversity and Inclusion - Innovation Roadmap 2023 Strategic Plan
Sherita Hill Golden, M.D.,M.H.S Vice President Chief Diversity officer of Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Enjoy the holidays!

- **Norad Santa Track Link:** <https://www.noradsanta.org/en/>