



## RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL OBSERVANCES

# Magha Puja Day

In support of Vanderbilt staff, students, faculty and postdocs, this information is offered as a resource about the Buddhist observance of Magha Puja Day.

MARCH 21, 2019

### HISTORY AND MEANING

This Buddhist holiday celebrates a moment about 2,500 years ago when 1,250 enlightened Buddhist monks who had all been ordained by the Buddha came to see the Buddha without being summoned on the night of the full moon of the third lunar month. At a second, similar gathering 45 years later, also held on the first full moon of the third month, the Buddha announced that he intended to die in three months' time. This announcement marks an important moment in Buddhist history. It is traditional to use this day to honor the Three Jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha (his enlightenment), the Sangha (the community of Buddhists around the world) and the Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha).

### TYPICAL OBSERVANCES

- Those observing this day will meditate on the Three Jewels of Buddhism.
- It is traditional for Buddhists to gather at the temple and circle the main hall three times while holding candles and burning incense.

### TIPS FOR SUPPORTING THE VANDERBILT COMMUNITY

- Communication is key. Ask how you can support observances.
- 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](http://vumc.org/health-wellness/work-life)

#### Students

Office of Student Care Coordination  
(615) 343-9355  
[vanderbilt.edu/carecoordination](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:religiouslife@vanderbilt.edu) or Human Resources at [human.resources@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:human.resources@vanderbilt.edu).