

## Holy Days and Cultural Observances 2023-2024 Academic Year

As a diverse community, Wittenberg strives to recognize spiritually and culturally significant days throughout the academic year that may be observed by our faculty, staff and students. Some holy days include fasting, attendance at religious services, and community events for adherents. Our community is mindful that such observances may lead students to miss class or faculty/staff to need time away from work (Dates that are most likely to lead to a requested absence are noted with a \* for planning purposes). Please work with students who need to miss class as a result of their faith practices. We invite questions for clarity and learning, which can be directed to Pastor Tracy or Suzanne Smailes. Blessings as you celebrate in the coming year!

### **Locations and Opportunities for Worship and Reflection:**

**Weekday Chapel:** weekly calendar: Every Tues & Thurs at 11:00-11:20 am (Weaver Chapel). Per University policy, classes and meetings should not be scheduled during chapel time.

**Evening Chapel:** Mondays from 7:00-7:30 in Weaver Chapel. A time of reflection, prayer and song.

**Interfaith Prayer and Meditation Room:** Located on the second floor of the library, this space is available for personal meditation, reflection, prayer and religious practices. A sink is available and the space is marked to identify the East wall for prayer and observance.

**Meditation Space:** The activity room in Weaver Chapel is being updated to offer space for prayer, meditation and personal reflection. A more intimate space within Weaver Chapel for reflection and mediation.

## **Religious and Secular Observances throughout 2023-2024 academic year**

### **Jewish - Holy Days: September – October 2023**

The Jewish High Holy days encompass the ten days from the beginning of Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and the end of Yom Kippur (Jewish Day of Atonement): observant students, faculty and staff might fast, attend synagogue, refrain from work/classes, request re-scheduling of exams.

\*Rosh Hashanah: Fri, Sept 15 – Sun, Sept 17 (sundown to sundown)

\*Yom Kippur: Sun, Sept 24 – Mon, Sept 25 (sundown to sundown)

Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths) celebrates the gathering of the Fall harvest. The holiday has also come to commemorate the 40 years of Jewish wandering in the desert after the giving of the Torah.

Sukkot: Fri Sept 29 – Fri Oct 6 (sundown to sundown)

Simchat Torah celebrates when the yearly cycle of Torah reading is completed and the next cycle is begun.

Simchat Torah: Sat Oct. 7- Sun Oct 8 (sundown to sundown)

### **Hindu - Festival of Lights - Diwali: November 2023**

Families light their homes and gather for feasts. The Springfield community often has an observance available to attend.

Diwali: Fri Nov 10 - Tues Nov 14

### **American Secular - Thanksgiving: November 2023**

A traditional harvest festival and time to give thanks for the year's blessings. Family and friends gather for a large meal of traditional foods and time together.

Thanksgiving: Thur Nov 23 (University closed 11/23-/11/24)

### **Jewish - Hanukkah (Festival of Lights): December 2023**

Commemoration of rededication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem. Celebrated through the lighting of candles on the evening of each night for 8 nights.

Hanukkah: Thur Dec 7 - Fri Dec 15 (sundown to sundown)

### **Christian - Advent & Christmas: December 2023**

A time of preparation and reflection (Advent) followed by the commemoration of the birth of Jesus. Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God, who came into the world to redeem and unite.

Advent: Sun Dec 3-Sun Dec 24

Christmas Eve: Sun Dec 24

Christmas Day: Mon Dec 25

(University is shut down 12/23-1/1)

### **Commonwealth Secular - Boxing Day: December 2023**

Traditionally a day when wealthy people gave boxes of food to those in poverty, today's traditions include time with family, meals and celebrations.

Boxing day: Thur Dec 26

### **Orthodox Christian – Christmas: January 2024**

Celebrated per the Julian calendar, Orthodox Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, who adherents believe is the Son of God.

\*Orthodox Christmas: Sun Jan 7

### **Southeast Asia - Lunar New Year: February 2024**

Dating back over 4,000 years, the Lunar New Year bids farewell to winter and welcomes a new season. Chinese Chunjie, Vietnamese Tet, Korean Solnal, it is also called the Spring Festival. It begins with the first new moon of the lunar calendar and ends with the Lantern Festival on the first full moon of the lunar calendar, 15 days later. Traditionally, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are reserved for family celebrations, including ceremonies honoring ancestors. Being with family is important. Traditionally Chinese people eat no animal products the 1st and 15th days during this time.

Lunar New Year: Sat Feb 10

Lantern Festival: Sat Feb 24

### **Christian - Lent, Holy Week & Easter: February-March 2024**

Beginning with Ash Wednesday (a somber day of repentance and imposition of ashes to remember the mortality of humans), Lent is a time of reflection, prayer, fasting and repentance for Christians. Holy Week commemorates the final week of Jesus' life, culminating on Good Friday (the day Jesus was crucified). Easter, the holiest day in the Christian calendar, celebrates the resurrection of Jesus and the power of death being defeated.

Ash Wednesday: Wed Feb 14 (Worship Service & Imposition of Ashes, Weaver Chapel 12:00pm)

Holy Week: Sun Mar 24-Sat Mar 30 (University closed March 29)

Easter: Sun Mar 31

### **Muslim – Ramadan: March-April 2024**

Ramadan is the holiest period of the Islamic year, commemorating Muhammad's reception of the divine revelation recorded in the Qur'an. Observed with strict fasting from sunrise to sundown of both water and food for the whole month. An iftar, or the meal to break the fast, begins with prayer at sundown. Observant students can request sundown meal pickup in Post 95 through Weaver Chapel/Pastor Tracy.

First evening of Ramadan: Sun Mar 10 (fasting begins the next day)

\*Eid al-Fitr: Mon Apr 9 (fasting ends at sundown)

### **Jewish – Purim: March 2024**

Purim: Synagogues hold plays and festivals to commemorate the defeat of Haman's plot to massacre the Jews recorded in the Book of Esther.

Purim: Sat Mar 23-Sun Mar 24 (sundown to sundown)

**Jewish – Passover: April 2024**

Passover commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. Students may want to be home with family, especially for the first two nights (4/22-4/23). Temple Sholom holds a Second Night Seder; students should call Temple Sholom well in advance for details. Weaver Chapel can assist in connecting students.

Passover: Mon Apr 22 – Tues Apr 30 (sundown to sundown)

**Jewish - Yom HaShoah: May 2024**

Yom HaShoah, Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust

Yom HaShoah: Sun May 5 (sundown) lasting up to 3 days

**Muslim - Eid al-Adha: June 2024**

Eid al-Adha, commemorating the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son; is the climax of the hajj pilgrimage for those in Mecca at the time.

\*Eid al-Adha: Mon June 17 – Tues June 18 (sundown to sundown)

**American Secular – Juneteenth: June 2024**

The oldest known celebration marking the end of slavery in the US (specifically Texas, 1865 after the Civil War had ended). Juneteenth is also known as “Freedom Day” and is celebrated by community festivals, celebrating Black culture, historical remembrance, and a ritual of “pouring of the libations” to connect oneself with ancestors by pouring a liquid offering.

Juneteenth: Wed June 19

**Muslim - Al-Hijra / Muharram: July-Aug 2024**

Al-Hijra / Muharram celebrates the Islamic New Year. Muharram is the name of the first month of the Islamic New Year. Observed with special prayers, some Muslims extend special devotions through lunar month.

Al-Hijra / Muharram: Sun July 7 - Sun Aug 4 (sundown-sundown)

**Muslim – Ashura: July 2024**

Ashura is observed for one or two days by Muslims through fasting and prayer. With different practices depending on Sunni or Shi’ite tradition and interpretation, it can mark the deeds of the Prophet Moses in freeing the Israelites in Egypt and/or martyrdom of Imam Hussein (the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad) and his family.

Ashura: Tues July 16-Wed July 17 (sundown to sundown)