

## RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC OBSERVANCES

The *American Conference on Diversity Calendar* is a resource designed to encourage public awareness of the great diversity of religious and ethnic groups that live in the United States. Holidays and festivals are included for many religious, ethnic and public occasions.

Teachers may find the calendar particularly helpful as it identifies opportunities for objective, non-creedal instruction about particular cultures. Employers will find that it serves as a reminder of those religious observances that may result in employee absences. Those using this calendar also should remember that it is based only on information available at the time of production. In particular, dates for lunar holidays are subject to change.

The *American Conference on Diversity Calendar* is intended to increase our sensitivity to each other and to our different needs. However, the list is not exhaustive of the observances of any one religion. Therefore, those using this resource in a classroom or employer setting may wish to add holidays and observances that are not listed in this calendar, but are celebrated by students in their school or colleagues in their workplace. As an additional aid to both teachers and employers, an alphabetical glossary of selected observances appears in this *American Conference on Diversity Calendar*.

### KEY TO RELIGIOUS GROUPS\*

Baha'i	<b>Ba</b>
Buddhist	<b>Bu</b>
Christian	<b>C</b>
Hindu	<b>H</b>
Interfaith	<b>I</b>
Jewish	<b>J</b>
Mormon	<b>Mo</b>
Muslim	<b>M</b>
Orthodox Christian	<b>O</b>
Protestant Christian	<b>P</b>
Roman Catholic	<b>RC</b>
Sikh	<b>S</b>

### Non-working holidays for Abrahamic faiths (Christianity, Islam and Judaism)

January 6 **Epiphany** (O)  
April 10 (sundown) **Passover** (J)  
April 14 **Good Friday** (P)  
April 16 **Easter** (P,RC)  
May 30 (sundown) – June 1 (sundown) **Shavuot** (J)  
June 25 (sundown) – June 28 (sundown) **Eid al-Fitr** (M)  
September 1 (sundown) – Sept. 5 (sundown) **Eid al-Adha** (M)  
September 20 (sundown) – Sept. 22 (sundown) **Rosh Hashanah** (J)  
September 29 (sundown) – Sept. 30 (sundown) **Yom Kippur** (J)  
October 4 (sundown) – Oct. 11 (sundown) **Sukkot** (J)  
October 11 (sundown) – Oct. 13 (sundown) **Shemini Atzeret** (J)  
October 12 (sundown) – Oct. 13 (sundown) **Simchat Torah** (J)  
December 25 **Christmas** (P,RC)



**American Conference on Diversity**<sup>SM</sup>

VALUING DIVERSITY, EDUCATING LEADERS, PROMOTING RESPECT

109 Church Street • New Brunswick, NJ 08901

732-745-9330 • Fax: 732-745-9419

<http://www.AmericanConferenceOnDiversity.org>

[Facebook.com/AmericanConferenceOnDiversity](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanConferenceOnDiversity)

[Twitter.com/AmConfDiversity](https://twitter.com/AmConfDiversity)

**American  
Conference  
on Diversity**<sup>SM</sup>



VALUING DIVERSITY,  
EDUCATING LEADERS,  
PROMOTING RESPECT

# 2017 Holidays & Festivals

109 Church Street • New Brunswick, NJ 08901

732-745-9330 • Fax: 732-745-9419

<http://www.AmericanConferenceOnDiversity.org>

[Facebook.com/AmericanConferenceOnDiversity](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanConferenceOnDiversity)

[Twitter.com/AmConfDiversity](https://twitter.com/AmConfDiversity)

### Mission

The American Conference on Diversity is dedicated to building just and inclusive schools, workplaces and communities through awareness, education and advocacy.

The programs, services and initiatives of the American Conference on Diversity are among the most important work focused on creating a more inclusive society. The American Conference on Diversity builds on a historic mission and creates programs and activities relevant and vital to 21st Century life. It is a journey we can all take together.

# 2017 Holidays & Festivals

JANUARY <i>Poverty Awareness Month</i>			FEBRUARY <i>Black/African American History Month</i>		
1	New Year's Day	F*	11	Tu Bishvat/Tu B'Shev	J
	Feast of the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God	RC	14	St. Valentine's Day	RC,I
5	Birth of Guru Gobind Singh	S	15	Nirvana Day	BU,S
6	Epiphany	O,P,RC	20	Presidents' Day	F*
7	Orthodox Christmas	O	25-31	Intercalary/Ayyám-i-Há	Ba
13	Magahi	S	27	Clean Monday-Lent Begins	O
15	World Religion Day	I	28	Shrove Tuesday	P, RC
16	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	F*			
28	Chinese New Year	BU			
MARCH <i>Women's History Month</i>			APRIL <i>Child Abuse Prevention Month</i>		
1	Ash Wednesday	P,RC	9	Palm Sunday	O, P, RC
2-20	Nineteen Day Fast Period	Ba	10	Passover/Pesach	J
12	Purim*	J	13	Maundy Thursday	P,RC
	Holi	H	14	Baisakhi/Vaisakhi	S
	Hola Mohalla	S		Good Friday	F,O,P,RC
17	St. Patrick's Day	RC	16	Easter/Pascha	F,O,P,RC
20	Spring Equinox	I	20-5/2	Ridvan	B
21	Naw-Ruz*	Ba	23	Lailat al Miraj	Mu
			24	Yom HaShoah	J
MAY <i>National Mental Health Month Asian/Pacific Islander Month</i>			JUNE <i>GLBT Pride Month</i>		
2	Ha'Atz	J	6-7/5	Pentecost	O,P,RC
10	Buddha Day	Bu	11	Trinity Sunday	O,P,RC
12	Lailat al Bara-ah	Mu	15	Corpus Christi	RC
23	Declaration of the Báb	Ba	16	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Sahib	S
25	Ascension	O,P,RC	19	Juneteenth	I
27-6/25	Ramadan	Mu	21	Summer Solstice	I
28	Ascension of Baha'u'llah*	Ba		Lailat al-Qadr	Mu
29	Memorial Day	F	26-28	'Eid al-Fitr*	Mu
30	Shavuot*	J			

**Stonewall Rebellion** Commemorates the 1969 rebellion when transgender, gay and lesbian patrons of the Stonewall Inn in NY stood their ground against police harassment and became the catalyst for the modern political movement for GLBT liberation.

**Trinity Sunday** The first Sunday after Pentecost; honors the Most Holy Trinity.

**Vaisakhi** Hindu and Sikh solar new year. Anniversary of the creation of the Khalsa (the army of the Pure Ones) in 1699. It is the most important holy day of the year for Sikhs.

**Wesak** In the Northern tradition, this is the anniversary of Buddha's birth. In the Southern tradition, this is celebrated during Visakha.

**World Religion Day** In 1950 this day was founded by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States to address the need for religious unity.

**Yom Hashoah** Jewish Holocaust Remembrance Day. This day has been established to remember the six million Jews killed by the Nazis in 1933-45.

**Yom Kippur** Jewish Day of Atonement. This holiest day of the Jewish year is observed with strict fasting, prayer and ceremonial repentance.

## Additional Notes

- **All Baha'i, Jewish and Muslim** holidays begin at sunset the previous day and end at sunset of the day noted on this calendar.
- **Buddhist** and **Hindu** holidays may be observed at different times than those indicated in the calendar. The observance date is dependant on both religious group affiliation and region. For example, Buddha's birthday is one of the most widely celebrated Buddhist holidays. However, there is no one date accepted by all Buddhists. Therefore, the observance of Buddha's birthday will vary by both tradition and region, as seen by the inclusion of Wesak, Bodhi Day, and Buddha Day in this calendar. (Please note that for all other Buddhist observances, this calendar provides the dates followed by the Theravada tradition.)
- **Christians** follow a number of different calendars depending on their denomination and/or their region. The American Conference on Diversity calendar includes both the dates of the Western calendar which is followed by the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches and the dates for the Orthodox New Calendar which is the same as the Western calendar for fixed holidays and observances but uses the Julian Calendar for moveable feasts. The Orthodox New Calendar is primarily used by the Greek and Cypriot Orthodox Churches.
- We recognize that for many **Christians**, an integral part of their faith is the observance of days that commemorate the lives of saints. These days have not been included as part of this calendar because they often differ by region, religious affiliation, and personal belief.
- **Jewish** dates on this calendar are in accordance with the Orthodox tradition. The length of some holidays and the extent to which they are observed may vary according to denominational affiliation.
- **Muslim** holidays are subject to change because observance is dictated by the phases and sightings of the moon.
- The **Sikh** calendar – their own Nanakshahi calendar, was adopted for use on March 14, 1999 and aligns with the Gregorian calendar.

## Explanatory Notes (continued)

**Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev** Anniversary of the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev in 1606 C.E., the fifth guru who built the Golden Temple of Amristar.

**Martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur** Anniversary of the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur in 1675 C.E., the ninth guru.

**Maundy Thursday** Also known as Holy Thursday, this day celebrates the institution of the Eucharist (or the Holy Communion) of Jesus' Last Supper.

**Mawlid Al-Nabi** Birthday of the Prophet Mohammed, ca 570 C.E.

**MLK Day** Commemorates the birthday of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Observed on the third Monday of January each year.

**National Coming Out Day** An international event which gives GLBT people the opportunity to "come out" to others about their sexuality. In the United States, the day is facilitated by the Human Rights Campaign's National Coming Out Project (NCOP).

**Naw Ruz** Baha'i and Iranian New Year.

**Navaratri** A Hindu Festival of the divine mother honoring Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings. It is celebrated according to local custom.

**Nirvana Day** In the Northern tradition, this is the anniversary of Buddha's passing away. In the Southern tradition, the Buddha's death is commemorated during Visakha.

**Nineteen Day Fast** A fast to be observed by adult Baha'is in good health from sunrise to sundown

**Palm Sunday** Celebrates the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem during Passover, usually reenacted by the waving of palm branches and singing of songs. This also commemorates the beginning of Holy Week.

**Pasach (Passover)** An 8 day commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt.

**Pentecost** Observation of the day when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples, following ascension of Jesus. The name indicates 50 days after Easter.

**Pioneer Day** Observance of the arrival of Brigham Young and the first settlers to Great Salt Lake, Utah on July 24, 1847.

**Purim** Feast of Lots; celebrates deliverance of the Jewish minority in Persia from genocide.

**Ramadan** The ninth month in the Islamic calendar; 30 days of strict fasting from sunup to sundown. In honor of the first revelations to the Prophet Muhammed.

**Ridvan** Commemoration of the declaration of Baha'u'llah to his followers in 1863. Work is to be suspended for the 1st, 9th, and 12th days.

**Rosh Hashanah** New Year; begins 10 days of penitence concluded on Yom Kippur.

**St. Patrick's Day** A cultural and religious holiday commemorating the anniversary of Saint Patrick's death (461 C.E.) and the arrival of Christianity in Ireland.

**Shavuot** Festival of Weeks; celebrates harvest of first fruits and commemorates Moses' descent from Mt. Sinai with the Torah and Commandments.

**Shmini Atzeret** Celebration of the eighth and last day of Sukkot.

**Simchat Torah** Festival celebrating the completion of the reading cycle of the Torah, the five books of Moses. Symbolized by singing, dancing, and marching around the synagogue. The first book is begun again.

# 2017 Holidays & Festivals

JULY			AUGUST		
Foreign Language Month					
4	Independence Day	F*	1	Tisha B'av	J
8	Asalha Puja	Bu	15	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	RC
9	Martyrdom of Báb	Ba		Dormition of the Theotokos	O
24	Pioneer Day	Mo		Krishna Janmashtami	H
SEPTEMBER			OCTOBER		
Hispanic-Latino American Heritage Month			Breast Cancer Awareness Month Diversity Awareness Month		
1-5	Eid al-Adha (US Date)	Mu	1	Ashura	Mu
4	Labor Day	F	5-11	Sukkot	J
21-22	Rosh Hashanah*	J	12	Shemini Atzeret	J
21-29	Navaratri	H	13	Simchat Torah	J
22- <sup>10</sup> / <sub>20</sub>	Al Hijra/Muharram	Mu	19	Diwali	H,S
22	Autumn Equinox	I	20	Birth of the Báb	Ba
30	Yom Kippur	J		Installation of Scriptures of Guru Granth Sahib	S
			22	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Ba
			31	Halloween/All Hallows Eve	I
				Reformation Day	P
NOVEMBER			DECEMBER		
Native American Heritage Month					
1	All Saints Day	P,RC	1	Mawlid al Nabi	Mu
2	All Souls Day	RC	3	Advent Begins	P,RU
11	Veterans Day	F	8	Bodhi Day	Bu
15	Nativity Fast Begins	O		Immaculate Conception	RC
23	Thanksgiving	F	13-20	Hannukkah*	J
26	Day of the Covenant	Ba	21	Winter Solstice	I
			24	Nativity Fast Ends	O
				Advent Ends	P, RC
			25	Christmas Day	F,O,P,RC

\* US Federal Holidays marked by an F

\*\* Interfaith Observances marked by an I

\*\*\* Some observers of the holidays in red may observe these or some of the days as non-working holidays.

# Explanatory Notes

*(Most Civic Holidays and other obvious festivals are not included.)*

---

**Advent** Period of four weeks in which Christians prepare for Christmas.

**Al-Hijra** Islamic remembrance of the migration of Mohammed and followers to Medina.

**All Saints Day** Christian day for honoring all the saints, especially those who do not have a special day.

**All Souls Day** Day of prayer, remembrance and intercession for the dead.

**Ascension Day** Celebrates Jesus' ascension to heaven.

**Ascension Baha'u' Ilah** A commemoration of the death of Baha'u'llah

**Ash Wednesday** Begins Christian Lent. Name derives from symbolic use of ashes to signify penitence.

**All Souls Day** A one day fast to commemorate God freeing The Children of Israel and Moses from Pharaoh.

**Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** Commemorates the assumption of Mary, mother of Jesus, into heaven.

**Ayyam-I Ha** Days devoted to the spiritual preparation for the Nineteen-Day Fast. Each day of Ayyam-I Ha is marked by a different virtue like hospitality, gift giving or charity.

**Baha'u'llah's Birthday** Commemorates the birth of the founders of the Baha'i faith in 1817.

**Birth of Báb** Anniversary of the birth of one of the twin Prophet Founders of the Baha'i faith, Mirza 'Ali-Muhammed, in 1819

**Birth of Guru Gobind Singh** Sikh observation of the 1666 C.E. birthday of the tenth and last human Guru; it is a religious celebration and prayers of prosperity are offered.

**Bodhi Day** Buddhist celebration of the time when Prince Gautama (Buddha) took his place under the Bodhi tree vowing to remain until he attained supreme enlightenment, ca. 596 B.C.E.

**Brotherhood/Sisterhood Week** originally sponsored by National Conference of Christian & Jews, is a week dedicated for people of all faiths to come together and reaffirm the human brotherhood that underlies the variations

**Buddha Day** The Day Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, and passed away.

**Chinese and Vietnamese New Year** A festive holiday celebrated for about two weeks. Each year is symbolized by a different animal.

**Christmas** Celebration of the birth of Christ.

**Cinco de Mayo** Celebrated in Mexico and by Mexican-Americans, commemorates the battle of Guadalupe in 1862, when a small Mexican army defeated a large French force.

**Corpus Christi** This is a feast in honor of the institution of the Eucharist during the last supper.

**Diwali** Festival of Lights symbolizing the human urge to move toward the light. One of four seasonal celebrations in India.

**Dusserah** Festival celebrating good over evil; the victory of Lord Rama over Ravana, the demon king of Lanka.

**Easter** Celebration of the resurrection of Christ.

**Eid al-Adha** Festival of animal sacrifice; commemorates the faith of Abraham; also a memorial to the dead. Meat is given to the poor.

## Explanatory Notes (continued)

---

**Eid al-Fitr** A 3 day Islamic Holiday marking the close of Ramadan

**Epiphany** End of the 12 days of Christmas; celebrates visit of the Three Kings to baby Jesus; Jan. 6 each year for churches following the Gregorian calendar; Eastern churches following Julian Calendar celebrate the feast on Jan 19. For Roman Catholics, the feast day is sometimes celebrated on the Sunday between Jan 2 and Jan 8

**Feast of the Nativity** is one of the most joyful days of the Orthodox Church. Orthodox Christians annually celebrate Christmas Day on this day, January 7 to remember Jesus Christ's birth. This date is according to the Julian calendar.

**Flag Day** Commemorates acceptance of the stars and stripes as the U.S. flag in 1777.

**Four Chaplains Day** Commemoration of the event in World War II when four Chaplains of Jewish and Christian traditions (Catholic and Protestant) gave their life jackets to others as a troop ship sank in the Atlantic Ocean.

**Good Friday** The Friday of Jesus' crucifixion.

**Hanukah** Festival of lights; eight day commemoration of the rededication of the Second Temple in 165 B.C.E. The eight candle menorah is lighted.

**Holi** Spring festival dedicated to the god of pleasure. It is a carnival occasion featuring bright colors, pilgrimages and bonfires.

**Holy Thursday** Commemorates the Last Supper when Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples on the night before he was crucified.

**Installation of the Guru Granth Sahib** Commemorates the installation of the Sikh scriptures by Guru Gobind Sing; these scriptures were installed as the perpetual guru.

**Juneteenth** Observed as the day African Americans were emancipated. It is the oldest known celebration of the ending of slavery.

**Krishna Janmashtami** Birthday of Lord Krishna falls on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the dark half of the month of Bhadrapada (August -September). A 24-hour fast is observed on this day which is broken at midnight.

**Kwanzaa** Seven day celebration of African American values and traditions and their continued vitality. Kwanzaa is Kiswahili and means "first fruits of the harvest."

**Lailat Al Bara-ah** Night of forgiveness; a night of prayer to Allah for forgiveness of the dead. Preparation of Ramadan through intense prayer.

**Lailat Al Miraj** Observance of Mohammed's night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascension to heaven.

**Lailat Al Qadr** Night of destiny. First revelation of Qu'ran to Prophet Mohammed. Observed during the last ten days of Ramadan

**Lent** Period of preparation for Easter; usually 40 days.

**Night of Destiny.** First revelation to Qur'an to Prophet Mohammed observed during the last ten days of Ramadan.

**Maghi** Commemoration of the battle in which 40 Sikhs (the Immortal Ones) laid down their lives for Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

**Martyrdom of the Bab** Ali Mohammed was executed in 1850 by Persian political and religious powers. Observed by abstaining from commerce and work.