



# 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances

James E. Wright, PHR, SHRM-CP, CDR  
Diversity & Inclusion Strategist





# January

**January 1:** New Year's Day, the first day of the year according to the modern Gregorian calendar, celebrated within most Western countries.

**January 1:** Feast Day of St. Basil, a holiday observed by the Eastern Orthodox Church, commemorating the death of Saint Basil the Great.

**January 3:** Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, which is celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church, commemorates the naming of the child Jesus.

**January 4:** World Braille Day, observed in order to raise awareness of the importance of braille as a means of communication in the full realization of the human rights for blind and partially sighted people. Celebrated on Louis Braille's birthday, the inventor of braille.

**January 5:** Guru Gobind Singh Ji's birthday, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs who initiated the Sikhs as the Khalsa (the pure ones) and is known as the Father of the Khalsa.

**January 5:** Twelfth Night, a festival celebrated by some branches of Christianity that marks the coming of the Epiphany.

**January 6:** Epiphany or Dia de los Reyes (Three Kings Day), a holiday observed by Eastern and Western Christians that recognizes the visit of the three wise men to the baby Jesus 12 days after his birth.

**January 6:** Christmas, recognized on this day by Armenian Orthodox Christians, who celebrate the birth of Jesus on Epiphany.

**January 7:** Christmas, recognized on this day by Eastern Orthodox Christians, who celebrate Christmas 13 days later than other Christian churches because they follow the Julian calendar rather than the Gregorian version of the Western calendar.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | January Continued

---

**January 13:** Lori-Maghi, an annual festival celebrated by the Sikhs commemorating the memory of 40 Sikh martyrs.

**January 14-April 27:** Kumbh Mela, a mass pilgrimage event which takes place every 12 years and is of deep religious significance to Hindus. Millions of devotees and pilgrims congregate on the banks of the Ganges River to take part in a ritual bathing on various dates through April 27. It is believed that taking a dip in the holy water cleanses devotees of their sins. It is known as the world's largest religious and cultural human gathering.

**January 14:** Makar Sankranti, a major harvest festival celebrated in various parts of India.

**January 17:** World Religion Day, observed by those of the Bahá'í faith to promote interfaith harmony and understanding.

**January 18-25:** The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, during which Christians pray for unity between all churches of the Christian faith.

**January 18:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day commemorates the birth of Martin Luther King Jr., the recipient of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize and an activist for nonviolent social change until his assassination in 1968.

**January 19:** Timkat, a holiday observed by Ethiopian Orthodox Christians who celebrate the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River on Epiphany.

**January 26:** Republic Day of India recognizes the date the Constitution of India came into law in 1950, replacing the Government of India Act of 1935. This day also coincides with India's 1930 declaration of independence.

**January 27:** The International Day of Commemoration to remember the victims of the Holocaust. The anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp in 1945 and U.N. Holocaust Memorial Day.

**January 27 (sundown to sundown):** Holocaust Remembrance Day, a time to "mourn the loss of lives, celebrate those who saved them, honor those who survived, and contemplate the obligations of the living." – Former President Barack Obama.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | January Continued

---

**January 27 (sundown to sundown):** Tu B'shevat or Rosh HaShanah La'llanot, a Jewish holiday recognizing "The New Year of the Trees." It is celebrated on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. In Israel, the flowering of the almond tree usually coincides with this holiday, which is observed by planting trees and eating dried fruits and nuts.

**January 28:** Mahayana New Year, a holiday celebrated by the Mahayana Buddhist branch, on the first full-moon day in January.



**February is Black History Month in the United States and Canada.** Since 1976, the month has been designated to remember the contributions of people of the African diaspora.

**February 1:** National Freedom Day, which celebrates the signing of the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery in 1865.

**February 1-2:** Imbolc, a Gaelic traditional festival marking the beginning of spring.

**February 1:** St. Brigid of Kildare, feast day for St. Brigid celebrated by some Christian denominations.

**February 2:** Candlemas - A Christian holiday that celebrates three occasions according to Christian belief: the presentation of the child Jesus; Jesus' first entry into the temple; and Virgin Mary's purification.

**February 3:** St. Blaise Day (The Blessing of the Throats), the feast day of St. Blaise of Sebaste celebrated by the Roman Catholic Church and some Eastern Catholic churches.

**February 3:** Setsubun-Sai (Beginning of Spring), the day before the beginning of spring in Japan, celebrated yearly as part of the Spring Festival.

**February 3:** Four Chaplains Day commemorates the 55th anniversary of the sinking of the United States army transport Dorchester and the heroism of the four chaplains aboard.

**February 11:** Asian-American Women's Equal Pay Day. The aim is to raise awareness about the pay gap between Asian-American women and White men. Asian-American women are paid 90 cents for every dollar paid to white men.

**February 12:** Lunar New Year, one of the most sacred of all traditional Chinese holidays, a time of family reunion and celebration. The Lunar New Year is also celebrated at this time in Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Mongolia.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | February Continued

---

**February 12-14:** Losar, the Tibetan Buddhist New Year, a time of renewal through sacred and secular practices.

**February 14:** St. Valentine's Day, a Western Christian feast day honoring one or two early saints named Valentinus. Typically associated with romantic love and celebrated by people expressing their love via gifts.

**February 15:** Parinirvana Day (or Nirvana Day), the commemoration of Buddha's death at the age of 80, when he reached the zenith of Nirvana. February 8 is an alternative date of observance.

**February 15:** Presidents Day, a federally recognized celebration in the United States of George Washington's birthday, as well as every president preceding Washington.

**February 16:** Vasant Panchami, the Hindu festival that highlights the coming of spring. On this day Hindus worship Saraswati Devi, the goddess of wisdom, knowledge, music, art, and culture.

**February 16:** Mardi Gras, the last day for Catholics to indulge before Ash Wednesday starts the sober weeks of fasting that accompany Lent. The term "Mardi Gras" is particularly associated with the carnival celebrations in New Orleans, Louisiana.

**February 16:** Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday. Though named for its former religious significance, it is chiefly marked by feasting and celebration, which traditionally preceded the observance of the Lenten fast. It is observed by various Christian denominations.

**February 17:** Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent on the Christian calendar. Its name is derived from the symbolic use of ashes to signify penitence. It takes place immediately after the excesses of the two days of Carnival that take place in Northern Europe and parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | February Continued

---

**February 25-28:** Intercalary Days or Ayyám-i-Há, celebrated by people of the Bahá'í faith. At this time, days are added to the Bahá'í calendar to maintain their solar calendar. Intercalary days are observed with gift giving, special acts of charity, and preparation for the fasting that precedes the New Year.

**February 25-26:** Purim, a Jewish celebration that marks the time when the Jewish community living in Persia was saved from genocide. On Purim, Jewish people offer charity and share food with friends.

**February 26:** Lantern Festival, the first significant feast after the Chinese New Year, named for watching Chinese lanterns illuminate the sky during the night of the event.

**February 27:** Maghi-Purnima, a Hindu festival especially for worshippers of Lord Vishnu. Millions of devotees take a holy bath on this day. Devotees also carry out charity work on this day.

**February 27-March 28:** Magha Puja Day (also known as Maka Bucha), a Buddhist holiday that marks an event early in the Buddha's teaching life when a group of 1,250 enlightened saints, ordained by the Buddha, gathered to pay their respect to him. It is celebrated on various dates in different countries.

**February 28 (sunset) to March 19 (sunset):** Nineteen-Day Fast, a time in the Bahá'í Faith to reinvigorate the soul and bring one closer to God. This fast takes place immediately before the beginning of the Bahá'í New Year.



# March

**March is Women's History Month.** Started in 1987, Women's History Month recognizes all women for their valuable contributions to history and society.

**March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month,** which was established to increase awareness and understanding of issues affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. March is National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month. It was established to raise public awareness of the autoimmune disease that affects the brain and spinal cord and assist those with multiple sclerosis in making informed decisions about their health care.

**March is National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month.** It was established to raise public awareness of the autoimmune disease that affects the brain and spinal cord and assist those with multiple sclerosis in making informed decisions about their health care.

**March 1:** St. David's Day, the feast day of St. David, the patron saint of Wales.

**March 7:** Meatfare Sunday (The Sunday of the Last Judgment), traditionally the last day of eating meat before Easter for Orthodox Christians.

**March 8:** International Women's Day. First observed in 1911 in Germany, it has now become a major global celebration honoring women's economic, political and social achievements.

**March 11:** Maha Shivarati, Hindu festival celebrated each year to honor Lord Shiva. It is celebrated just before the arrival of spring. It is also known as the Great Night of Shiva or Shivaratri and is one of the largest and most significant among the sacred festival nights of India.



## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | March Continued

---

**March 11:** Lailat al Miraj, a Muslim holiday that commemorates the prophet Muhammad's nighttime journey from Mecca to the "Farthest Mosque" in Jerusalem, where he ascended to heaven, was purified, and given the instruction for Muslims to pray five times daily. Note that in the Muslim calendar, a holiday begins on the sunset of the previous day, so observing Muslims will celebrate Lailat al Miraj on the sundown of March 10.

**March 13-April 15:** Deaf History Month. This observance celebrates key events in deaf history, including the founding of Gallaudet University and the American School for the Deaf.

**March 14:** Cheesefare Sunday or Forgiveness Sunday, the last Sunday prior to the commencement of Great Lent for Orthodox Christians.

**March 15-May 1:** Beginning of Great Lent in the Orthodox Christian faith. March 15, the day Great Lent begins this year, is also known as Clean Monday.

**March 17:** St. Patrick's Day, a holiday started in Ireland to recognize St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland who brought Christianity to the country in the early days of the faith.

**March 19:** St. Joseph's Day, in Western Christianity the principal feast of St. Joseph, the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**March 19-20:** Naw-Rúz, the Bahá'í New Year is a holiday celebrated on the vernal equinox. It is one of the nine Bahá'í holy days on which work is suspended.

**March 20:** Ostara, a celebration of the spring equinox commemorated by Pagans and Wiccans. It is observed as a time to mark the coming of spring and the fertility of the land.

**March 21-22:** Nowruz/Norooz, Persian New Year, a day of joy, celebration and renewal. It is held annually on the spring equinox.

**March 21:** International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, observed annually in the wake of the 1960 killing of 69 people at a demonstration against apartheid pass laws in South Africa. The United Nations proclaimed the day in 1966 and called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | March Continued

---

**March 21:** Orthodox Sunday, celebrated on the first Sunday of Great Lent. It is the celebration of the victory of the iconodules over the iconoclasts by the decision of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. Therefore, the service is to commemorate the restoration of icons for use in services and private devotional life of Christians.

**March 25:** International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is a United Nations international observation that offers the opportunity to honor and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system. First observed in 2008, the international day also aims to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice today.

**March 25:** Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, a Christian celebration of the announcement by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive and become the mother of Jesus.

**March 26:** Khordad Sal (Birth of prophet Zoroaster), birth anniversary (or birthdate) of Zoroaster, a spiritual leader and ethical philosopher who taught a spiritual philosophy of self-realization and realization of the divine. Zoroastrians celebrate this day with prayer and feasting.

**March 27-April 4:** Passover, an eight-day Jewish holiday and festival in commemoration of the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt.

**March 27:** Lord's Evening Meal, Jehovah's Witnesses commemorate an event believed to have occurred on the first night of Passover in approximately 33 CE, the Last Supper, known as the Lord's Evening Meal.

**March 28:** Palm Sunday, a Christian holiday commemorating the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. It is the last Sunday of Lent and the beginning of the Holy Week.

**March 28-29 (sundown to sundown):** Holi, the annual Hindu and Sikh spring religious festival observed in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, along with other countries with large Hindu and Sikh populations. People celebrate Holi by throwing colored powder and water at each other. Bonfires are lit the day before in the memory of the miraculous escape that young Prahlada accomplished when demoness Holika carried him into the fire. It is often celebrated on the full moon (the Phalguna Purnima) before the beginning of the Vernal Equinox as based on the Hindu calendar.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | March Continued

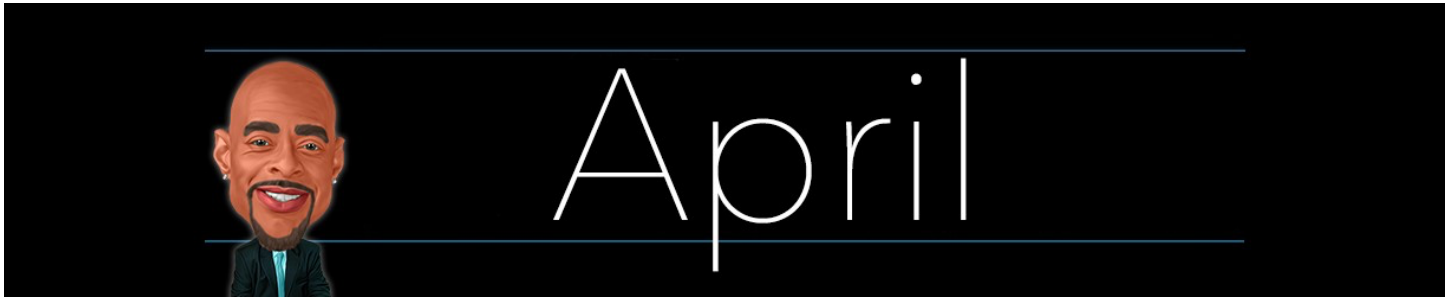
---

**March 28-29:** Lailat al Bara'a, also known as Lailat Al Baraah, Barat, or popularly as Shab-e-Bara or Night of Forgiveness. It is an Islamic holiday during which practitioners of the faith seek forgiveness for sins. Muslims spend the night in special prayers. It is regarded as one of the most sacred nights on the Islamic calendar.

**March 29-31:** Hola Mohalla, a Sikh festival that takes place on the second day of the lunar month of Chet, a day after the Hindu spring festival Holi.

**March 31:** Cesar Chavez Day is a U.S. federal commemorative holiday, proclaimed by President Barack Obama in 2014. The holiday celebrates the birth and legacy of the civil rights and labor movement activist Cesar Chavez on March 31 every year.

**March 31:** International Transgender Day of Visibility, celebrated to bring awareness to transgender people and their identities as well as recognize those who helped fight for rights for transgender people.



**April is Celebrate Diversity Month**, started in 2004 to recognize and honor the diversity surrounding us all. By celebrating differences and similarities during this month, organizers hope that people will get a deeper understanding of each other.

**April is Autism Awareness Month**, established to raise awareness about the developmental disorder that affects an individual's normal development of social and communication skills.

**April 1:** Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday), the Christian holiday commemorating the Last Supper, at which Jesus and the Apostles were together for the last time before the Crucifixion. It is celebrated on the Thursday before Easter.

**April 2:** Good Friday, a day celebrated by Christians to commemorate the execution of Jesus by crucifixion. It is recognized on the Friday before Easter.

**April 2:** World Autism Awareness Day, created to raise awareness of the developmental disorder around the globe.

**April 4:** Easter, a holiday celebrated by Christians to recognize Jesus' return from death after the Crucifixion.

**April 7-8:** Yom HaShoah, Israel's day of remembrance for the approximately 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

**April 12-May 11 (sundown to sundown):** Ramadan, an Islamic holiday marked by fasting, praise, prayer and devotion to Islam.

**April 12:** Hindi New Year.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | April Continued

---

**April 13:** Equal Pay Day, an attempt to raise awareness about the raw wage gap, the figure that shows that women, on average, earn about 80 cents for every dollar men earn. The date moves earlier each year as the wage gap closes. Equal Pay Day began in 1996 by the National Committee on Pay Equity as a public awareness event to illustrate the gender pay gap.

**April 14:** Vaisakhi (also known as Baisakhi), the celebration of the founding of the Sikh community as the Khalsa (community of the initiated) and the birth of the Khalsa.

**April 16-17 (sundown to sundown):** Yom Ha'Atzmaut, national Independence Day in Israel.

**April 20-May 1:** The Festival of Ridvan, a holiday celebrated by those of the Bahá'í faith, commemorating the 12 days when Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet-founder, resided in a garden called Ridvan (paradise) and publicly proclaimed his mission as God's messenger for this age.

**April 21:** Ram Navami, a Hindu day of worship and celebration of the seventh avatar of Vishnu (Lord Rama). Devotees typically wear red and place extravagant flowers on the shrine of the God.

**April 22:** Earth Day promotes world peace and sustainability of the planet. Events are held globally to show support of environmental protection of the Earth.

**April 23:** St. George's Day, the feast day of St. George celebrated by various Christian churches.

**April 23:** The Day of Silence, during which students take a daylong vow of silence to protest the actual silencing of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students and their straight allies due to bias and harassment.

**April 24:** Lazarus Saturday, a day celebrated by the Eastern Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodoxy to commemorate the raising of Lazarus of Bethany.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | April Continued

---

**April 24:** Armenian Martyrs' Day recognizes the genocide of approximately 1.5 million Armenians between 1915 and 1923 in Turkey.

**April 25:** Mahavir Jayanti, a holiday celebrated by the Jains commemorating the birth of Lord Mahavira. It is one of the most important religious festivals for Jains.

**April 28:** Ninth Day of Ridvan, a festival of joy and unity in the Bahá'í faith to commemorate the reunification of Bahá'u'lláh's family, and by extension the unity of the entire human family the Bahá'í faith calls for. It permeates the symbolic meaning of the Ninth Day of Ridvan.

**April 29-30 (sundown to sundown):** Lag BaOmer, a Jewish holiday marking the day of hillula of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.



# May

**May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in the United States.** The month of May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. The majority of the workers who laid the tracks on the project were Chinese immigrants.

**May is Older Americans Month,** established in 1963 to honor the legacies and contributions of older Americans and to support them as they enter their next stage of life. May is Jewish American Heritage Month, which recognizes the diverse contributions of the Jewish people to American culture.

**May is Mental Health Awareness Month (or Mental Health Month),** which aims to raise awareness and educate the public about mental illnesses and reduce the stigma that surrounds mental illnesses.

**May 1:** Beltane, an ancient Celtic festival celebrated on May Day, signifying the beginning of summer.

**May 2:** Orthodox Easter (also called Pascha), a later Easter date than observed by many Western churches.

**May 3:** Saints Philip and James, a Roman Rite feast day for the anniversary of the dedication of the church to Saints Phillip and James in Rome.

**May 5:** Cinco de Mayo, a Mexican holiday commemorating the Mexican army's 1862 victory over France at the Battle of Puebla during the Franco-Mexican War (1861-1867). This day celebrates Mexican culture and heritage, including parades and mariachi music performances.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | May Continued

---

**May 6:** National Day of Prayer, a day of observance in the United States when people are asked to “turn to God in prayer and meditation.”

**May 9:** Mother's Day is a celebration honoring the mother of the family, as well as motherhood, maternal bonds, and the influence of mothers in society. It is celebrated on various days in many parts of the world, most commonly in the months of March or May.

**May 9:** Laylat al-Qadr, the holiest night of the year for Muslims, is traditionally celebrated on the 27th day of Ramadan. It is known as the Night of Power and commemorates the night that the Quran was first revealed to the prophet Muhammad.

**May 12-13 (sundown to sundown):** Eid al-Fitr, the first day of the Islamic month of Shawwal, marking the end of Ramadan. Many Muslims attend communal prayers, listen to a khutuba (sermon), and give Zakat al-Fitr (charity in the form of food) during Eid al-Fitr.

**May 13:** Ascension of Jesus or Ascension Day, is celebrated as the ascension of Christ from Earth in the presence of God within most of the Christian faith.

**May 16-18 (sundown to sundown):** Shavuot, a Jewish holiday that has double significance. It marks the all-important wheat harvest in Israel and commemorates the anniversary of the day when God gave the Torah to the nation of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai.

**May 17:** International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, a global celebration of sexual-orientation and gender diversities.

**May 21:** World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, a day set aside by the United Nations as an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to learn to live together in harmony.

**May 22-23 (sundown to sundown):** Declaration of the Báb, the day of declaration of the Báb, the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith.

**May 23:** Pentecost, the celebration of the giving of the Ten Commandments by God at Mount Sinai.



## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | May Continued

---

**May 26:** Buddha Day (Vesak or Visakha Puja), a Buddhist festival that marks Gautama Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. It falls on the day of the full moon in May and it is a gazetted holiday in India.

**May 31:** Memorial Day in the United States, a federal holiday established to honor military veterans who died in wars fought by American forces.

**May 29:** Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, commemorates the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith.

**May 30:** Trinity Sunday, observed in the Western Christian faith as a feast in honor of the Holy Trinity.

**May 30:** All Saints' Day, celebrated by many Eastern Christian churches on the first Sunday after Pentecost, in recognition of all known and unknown saints.



# June

**June is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month**, established to recognize the impact that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals have had on the world. LGBT groups celebrate this special time with pride parades, picnics, parties, memorials for those lost to hate crimes and HIV/AIDS, and other group gatherings. The last Sunday in June is Gay Pride Day.

**June is Immigrant Heritage Month**, established in June 2014, gives people across the United States an opportunity to annually explore their own heritage and celebrate the shared diversity that forms the unique story of America. It celebrates immigrants across the United States and their contributions to their local communities and economy.

**June 3:** Corpus Christi, a Catholic holiday celebrating the presence of the body and blood of Christ, in the Eucharist.

**June 11:** Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart is a solemnity in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church.

**June 14:** Flag Day in the United States, observed to celebrate the history and symbolism of the American flag.

**June 15:** St. Vladimir Day, a Roman Catholic feast celebrating St. Vladimir.

**June 15:** Native American Citizenship Day, commemorating the day in 1924 when the U.S. Congress passed legislation recognizing the citizenship of Native Americans.

**June 16:** Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, observed by members of the Sikh faith. Guru Arjan Dev was the fifth Sikh guru and the first Sikh martyr.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | June Continued

---

**June 19:** Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day. It is observed as a public holiday in 14 U.S. states. This celebration honors the day in 1865 when slaves in Texas and Louisiana finally heard they were free, two months after the end of the Civil War. June 19, therefore, became the day of emancipation for thousands of African-Americans.

**June 19:** New Church Day, according to Christian belief, on this day the Lord called together the 12 disciples who had followed him on earth, instructed them in the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem, and sent them out to teach that "the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages." This was the beginning of the New Christian Church.

**June 20:** Father's Day is a day of honoring fatherhood and paternal bonds, as well as the influence of fathers in society. In Catholic countries of Europe, it has been celebrated on March 19 as Saint Joseph's Day since the Middle Ages

**June 21:** National Indigenous Peoples Day or First Nations Day, a day that gives recognition to the indigenous populations affected by colonization in Canada.

**June 21:** Litha, the summer solstice celebrated by the Wiccans and Pagans. It is the longest day of the year, representing the sun's "annual retreat."

**June 29:** Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul, a liturgical feast in honor of the martyrdom in Rome for the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul in Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

**Last Sunday in June:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Pride Day in the United States. It celebrates the Stonewall Riots on June 28, 1969.



**July 1:** Canada Day, or Fête du Canada, is a Canadian federal holiday that celebrates the 1867 enactment of the Constitution Act, which established the three former British colonies of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick as a united nation called Canada.

**July 4:** Independence Day (also known as the Fourth of July), a United States federal holiday that celebrates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The original 13 American colonies declared independence from Britain and established themselves as a new nation known as the United States of America.

**July 8-9 (sundown to sundown):** The Martyrdom of the Bab, a day when Bahá'ís observe the anniversary of the Báb's execution in Tabriz, Iran, in 1850. July 11: St. Benedict Day, the feast day of St. Benedict celebrated by some Christian denominations.

**July 11:** World Population Day, an observance established in 1989 by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme. The annual event is designed to raise awareness of global population issues.

**July 14:** International Non-Binary People's Day, aimed at raising awareness and organizing around the issues faced by non-binary people around the world while celebrating their contributions.

**July 14:** Bastille Day, a French federal holiday that commemorates the Storming of the Bastille, a fortress-prison in Paris that held political prisoners who had displeased the French nobility. The Storming of the Bastille, which took place on July 14, 1789, was regarded as a turning point of the French Revolution. Celebrations are held throughout France.

**July 15:** St. Vladimir of the Great Day, feast day for St. Vladimir celebrated by the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | July Continued

---

**July 17-18:** Tisha B'Av, a fast in commemoration of the destruction of two holy and sacred temples of Judaism destroyed by the Babylonians (in 586 B.C.E) and Romans (in 70 C.E.). At the Tisha B'Av, after select passages from the Torah are read and understood, netilat yadayim, or the washing of the hands, is performed.

**July 18-19 (sundown to sundown):** Waqf al Arafa, the second day of pilgrimage within the Islamic faith.

**July 18:** Nelson Mandela International Day, launched on July 18, 2009, in recognition of Nelson Mandela's birthday via unanimous decision of the U.N. General Assembly. It was inspired by a call Nelson Mandela made a year earlier for the next generation to take on the burden of leadership in addressing the world's social injustices: "It is in your hands now." It is more than a celebration of Mandela's life and legacy; it is a global movement to honor his life's work and to change the world for the better.

**July 19-20 (sundown to sundown):** Eid al-Adha, an Islamic festival to commemorate the willingness of Ibrahim (also known as Abraham) to follow Allah's (God's) command to sacrifice his son, Ishmael. Muslims around the world observe this event.

**July 23:** The birthday of Haile Selassie I, the former Emperor of Ethiopia whom the Rastafarians consider to be their savior.

**July 24:** Asalha Puja, or Dharma Day, is a celebration of Buddha's first teachings.

**July 24:** Pioneer Day, observed by the Mormons to commemorate the arrival in 1847 of the first Latter Day Saints pioneer in Salt Lake Valley.

**July 25:** St. James the Greater Day, feast day for St. James the Greater celebrated by some Christian denominations.

**July 26:** Disability Independence Day, celebrating the anniversary of the 1990 signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**July 30:** International Day of Friendship, proclaimed in 2011 by the U.N. General Assembly with the idea that friendship between peoples, countries, cultures and individuals can inspire peace efforts and build bridges between communities.



# August

**August 1:** Lammas, a festival to mark the annual wheat harvest within some English-speaking countries in the Northern Hemisphere.

**August 1:** Lughnasadh, a Gaelic festival marking the beginning of the harvest season.

**August 1:** Fast in Honor of Holy Mother of Jesus, beginning of the 14-day period of preparation for Orthodox Christians leading up to the Dormition of the Virgin Mary.

**August 6:** Transfiguration of the Lord (Feast of the Transfiguration), celebrated by various Christian denominations, the feast day is dedicated to the transfiguration of Jesus.

**August 10:** Hijri New Year, the day that marks the beginning of the new Islamic calendar year.

**August 13:** Black Women's Equal Pay Day. The aim is to raise awareness about the wider-than-average pay gap between Black women and White men. Black women are paid 62 cents for every dollar paid to white men.

**August 15:** Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the beliefs of the Catholic Church, Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxy, as well as parts of Anglicanism, the day commemorates the bodily taking up of the Virgin Mary into heaven at the end of her earthly life.

**August 15:** Dormition of the Theotokos, a Great Feast of the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches that commemorates the "falling asleep," or death, of Mary the Theotokos ("Mother of God") and her bodily resurrection before ascending into heaven.

**August 17:** Marcus Garvey Day, which celebrates the birthday of the Jamaican politician and activist who is revered by Rastafarians. Garvey is credited with starting the Back to Africa movement, which encouraged those of African descent to return to the land of their ancestors during and after slavery in North America.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | August Continued

---

**August 18-19 (sundown to sundown):** Ashura, an Islamic holiday commemorating the day Noah left the ark and the day Allah saved Moses from the Egyptians.

**August 22:** Obon (Ullambana), a Buddhist festival and Japanese custom for honoring the spirits of ancestors.

**August 22:** Raksha Bandhan, a Hindu holiday commemorating the loving kinship between a brother and sister. "Raksha" means "protection" in Hindi and symbolizes the longing a sister has to be protected by her brother. During the celebration, a sister ties a string around her brother's (or brother-figure's) wrist and asks him to protect her. The brother usually gives the sister a gift and agrees to protect her for life.

**August 22:** Hungry Ghost Festival, a Chinese holiday where street, market, and temple ceremonies take place to honor dead ancestors and appease other spirits.

**August 23:** International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition and the anniversary of the uprising in Santo Domingo (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic) that initiated the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean.

**August 26:** Women's Equality Day, which commemorates the August 26, 1920, certification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that gave women the right to vote. Congresswoman Bella Abzug first introduced a proclamation for Women's Equality Day in 1971. Since that time, every president has published a proclamation recognizing August 26 as Women's Equality Day.

**August 29-30:** Krishna Janmashtami, a Hindu celebration of Lord Vishnu's most powerful human incarnations, Krishna, the god of love and compassion. Celebrations include praying and fasting.



# September

**Hispanic Heritage Month is observed from September 15 to October 15.**

**This month corresponds with Mexican Independence Day**, which is celebrated on September 16, and recognizes the revolution in 1810 that ended Spanish dictatorship.

**September 4-11:** Paryushana Parva, a Jain festival lasting about eight to ten days that is observed through meditation and fasting. Its main focus is spiritual upliftment, pursuit of salvation and a deeper understanding of the religion.

**September 6:** Labor Day in the United States. Labor Day honors the contribution that laborers have made to the country and is observed on the first Monday of September.

**September 6-8 (sundown to sundown):** Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year celebration, marking the creation of the world.

**September 10:** Ganesh Chaturthi, a Hindu holiday lasting around 10 days, where the elephant-headed Hindu God is praised and given offerings.

**September 11:** Beheading of St. John the Baptist, a holy day observed by various Christian churches that follow liturgical traditions. The day commemorates the martyrdom by the beheading of St. John the Baptist on the orders of Herod Antipas through the vengeful request of his stepdaughter, Salome, and her mother.

**September 11:** Ethiopian New Year. Rastafarians celebrate the New Year on this date and believe that Ethiopia is their spiritual home.

**September 15-16 (sundown to sundown):** Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, a day of atonement marked by fasting and ceremonial repentance.



## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | September Continued

---

**September 16:** Mexican Independence Day, this fiesta-friendly holiday celebrates Mexico's declaration of independence from Spain in 1810, and it's filled with national pride, colorful parades, mariachi concerts, and food, food and more sabrosa food. People of Mexican heritage all over the world commemorate this important event in their country's history, when a brave priest in the village of Delores rang his church bell and delivered a powerful speech that set the War of Independence from Spain in motion. Even the President of Mexico participates by ringing that same bell – now over 200 years old – live on TV the night before the big celebration.

**September 18:** International Equal Pay Day, celebrated for the first time in September 2020, represents the longstanding efforts towards the achievement of equal pay for work of equal value. It further builds on the United Nations' commitment to human rights and against all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against women and girls.

**September 20-27:** Sukkot, a seven-day Jewish festival giving thanks for the fall harvest.

**September 22:** Ostara Mabon, a celebration of the vernal equinox commemorated by Pagans and Wiccans.

**September 24:** Native American Day, a Federal holiday observed annually on the fourth Friday in September in the state of California and Nevada and on the second Monday in October in South Dakota and Oklahoma, United States.

**September 27:** Elevation of the Life Giving Cross (Holy Cross), a day that commemorates the cross used in the Crucifixion of Jesus in some Christian denominations.

**September 27:** Meskel, religious holiday in the Ethiopian Orthodox and Eritrean Orthodox churches that commemorates the discovery of the True Cross by the Roman Empress, Helena, in the fourth century.

**September 27-29 (sundown to sundown):** Shemini Atzeret, a Jewish holiday also known as The Eighth (Day) of Assembly, takes place the day after the Sukkot festival, where gratitude for the fall harvest is deeply internalized.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | September Continued

---

**September 28:** Teacher's Day in Taiwan. This day is used to honor teachers' contributions to their students and to society in general. People often express their gratitude to their teachers by paying them a visit or sending them a card. This date was chosen to commemorate the birth of Confucius, the model master educator in ancient China.

**September 28-29 (sundown to sundown):** Simchat Torah, a Jewish holiday, marks the end of the weekly readings of the Torah. The holy book is read from chapter one of Genesis to Deuteronomy 34 and then back to chapter one again, in acknowledgement of the words of the Torah being a circle, a never-ending cycle.

**September 29:** Michaelmas, or the Feast of Michael and All Angels, is a minor Christian festival dedicated to Archangel Michael that is observed in some Western liturgical calendars.



# October

**October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month.** This observance was launched in 1945 when Congress declared the first week in October as “National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week.” In 1998, the week was extended to a month and renamed. The annual event draws attention to employment barriers that still need to be addressed.

**October is LGBT History Month,** a U.S. observance started in 1994 to recognize lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history and the history of the gay-rights movement.

**October is Global Diversity Awareness Month,** a month to celebrate and increase awareness about the diversity of cultures and ethnicities and the positive impact diversity can have on society.

**October 1:** The beginning of Black History Month in the UK, Ireland, and The Netherlands.

**October 1:** Native American Women’s Equal Pay Day. The aim is to raise awareness about the wider-than-average pay gap between Native American women and White men. Native American women are paid 57 cents for every dollar paid to white men.

**October 4:** St. Francis Day, feast day for St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and the environment, celebrated by many Catholic denominations.

**October 4:** Blessing of the Animals, in congruence with St. Francis Day. Many Unitarian Universalists have picked up on the Catholic tradition of blessing animals, particularly pets, as St. Francis was known for his special connection to animals.

**October 6-14:** Navaratri, the nine-day festival celebrating the triumph of good over evil. It worships God in the form of the universal mother commonly referred to as Durga, Devi or Shakti, and marks the start of fall.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | October Continued

---

**October 10:** World Mental Health Day. First celebrated in 1993, this day is meant to increase public awareness about the importance of mental health, mental health services, and mental health workers worldwide.

**October 11:** National Coming Out Day (U.S.). For those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, this day celebrates coming out and the recognition of the 1987 march on Washington for gay and lesbian equality.

**October 11:** Canadian Thanksgiving, a chance for people to give thanks for a good harvest and other fortunes in the past year.

**October 11:** National Indigenous Peoples Day, an alternative celebration to Columbus Day, gives recognition to the indigenous populations affected by colonization.

**October 15:** Dasara, Dussehra, or Vijayadashami, in the eastern and northeastern states of India, marks the end of Durga Puja, remembering goddess Durga's victory over the buffalo demon Mahishasura to help restore dharma.

**October 16:** Milvian Bridge Day, a one-day festival in Fayetteville, West Virginia. It is the only day of the year people can BASE jump off a bridge into New River Gorge.

**October 18-19 (sundown to sundown):** Eid Milad un-Nabi, an Islamic holiday commemorating the birthday of the prophet Muhammad. During this celebration, homes and mosques are decorated, large parades take place, and those observing the holiday participate in charity events.

**October 19:** Mawlid Al-Nabi, the observance of the birthday of Islam founder Prophet Muhammad, celebrated during the month of Rabiulawal, the third month of the Muslim calendar. Shi'a Muslims celebrate it five days later than Sunni Muslims.

**October 20:** Sikh Holy Day, the day Sikhs celebrate Sri Guru Granth Sahib, their spiritual guide.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | October Continued

---

**October 20:** International Pronouns Day seeks to make respecting, sharing, and educating about personal pronouns commonplace. Each year it is held on the third Wednesday of October.

**October 29:** Latinx Women's Equal Pay Day. The aim is to raise awareness about the wider-than-average pay gap between Latinx women and White men. Latinx women are paid 54 cents for every dollar paid to white men.

**October 31:** All Hallows' Eve (Halloween), a celebration observed in a number of countries on the eve of the Western Christian feast of All Hallows' Day. It begins the three-day observance of Allhallowtide, the time in the liturgical year dedicated to remembering the dead, including saints (hallows), martyrs and all the faithful departed.

**October 31:** Reformation Day, a Protestant Christian religious holiday celebrated alongside All Hallows' Eve (Halloween) during the triduum of Allhallowtide in remembrance of the onset of the Reformation.

**October 31-November 1 (sundown to sundown):** Samhain, a Gaelic festival marking the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter or the "darker half" of the year.



# November

**November is National Native American Heritage Month**, which celebrates the history and contributions of Native Americans.

**November is National Family Caregivers Month**, proclaimed in 2012 by Former President Barack Obama. It honors the more than 40 million caregivers across the country who support aging parents, ill spouses or other loved ones with disabilities who remain at home.

**November 1:** All Saints' Day, a Christian holiday commemorating all known and unknown Christian saints. (In Eastern Christianity, the day is observed on the first Sunday after Pentecost.)

**November 2:** All Souls' Day, a Christian holiday commemorating all faithful Christians who are now dead. In the Mexican tradition, the holiday is celebrated as Dia de los Muertos (October 31- November 2), which is a time of remembrance for dead ancestors and a celebration of the continuity of life.

**November 4:** Diwali, the Hindu, Jain and Sikh five-day festival of lights celebrates new beginnings and the triumph of good over evil and lightness over darkness.

**November 5-6 (sundown to sundown):** Birth of Báb, a Bahá'í holiday celebrating the birth of the prophet Báb.

**November 6-7 (sundown to sundown):** The birth of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í religion.

**November 11:** Veterans Day, a U.S. federal holiday honoring military veterans. The date is also celebrated as Armistice Day, or Remembrance Day, in other parts of the world and commemorates the ending of World War I in 1918.

## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | November Continued

---

**November 19:** International Men's Day emphasizes the important issues affecting males, including health issues that affect males, improving the relations between genders, highlighting the importance of male role models and promoting gender equality. This holiday is celebrated in over 70 countries.

**November 20:** Transgender Day of Remembrance, established in 1998 to memorialize those who have been killed as a result of transphobia and to raise awareness of the continued violence endured by the transgender community.

**November 21:** Feast of Christ the King, a Catholic holiday established in thanking God for the gift of time and a rededication to the Christian faith.

**November 25:** Thanksgiving in the United States. It began as a day of giving thanks for the blessing of the harvest and of the preceding year.

**November 26:** Native American Heritage Day, held annually the Friday after Thanksgiving, encourages Americans of all backgrounds to observe and honor Native Americans through appropriate ceremonies and activities. The day was signed into law by George W. Bush in 2008.

**November 28-December 6:** Hanukkah, a Jewish holiday that is celebrated around the world for eight days and nights. Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees, or Israelites, over the Greek-Syrian ruler, Antiochus, approximately 2,200 years ago.

**November 28-January 6:** Nativity Fast, a period of abstinence and penance practiced by the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches in preparation for the Nativity of Jesus.

**November 28- December 24** Advent, a Christian season of celebration leading up to the birth of Christ.

**November 30:** St. Andrew's Day, the feast day for St. Andrew within various Christian denominations.



# December

**December 1:** World AIDS Day, commemorating those who have died of AIDS, and to acknowledge the need for a continued commitment to all those affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

**December 3:** International Day of Persons with Disabilities, designed to raise awareness in regards to persons with disabilities in order to improve their lives and provide them with equal opportunity.

**December 8:** Immaculate Conception of Mary, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception celebrates the solemn celebration, by various Christian denominations, of belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**December 8:** Bodhi Day, the Buddhist holiday that commemorates the day that the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama (Shakyamuni), experienced enlightenment, also known as bodhi in Sanskrit and Pali.

**December 10:** International Human Rights Day, established by the United Nations in 1948 to commemorate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**December 12:** Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a religious holiday in Mexico commemorating the appearance of the Virgin Mary near Mexico City in 1531.

**December 13:** St. Lucia's Day, a religious festival of light in Scandinavia and Italy commemorating the martyrdom of St. Lucia, a young Christian girl who was killed for her faith in 304 C.E. She secretly brought food to persecuted Christians in Rome while wearing a wreath of candles on her head so both her hands would be free.

**December 16-24:** Las Posadas, a nine-day celebration in Mexico commemorating the trials Mary and Joseph endured during their journey to Bethlehem.



## 2021 Diversity Holidays & Observances | December Continued

---

**December 21:** Yule Winter Solstice, celebrated by Pagans and Wiccans. The shortest day of the year represents a celebration focusing on rebirth, renewal and new beginnings as the sun makes its way back to the Earth. A solstice is an astronomical event that happens twice each year when the sun reaches its highest position in the sky.

**December 25:** Christmas Day, the day that many Christians associate with Jesus' birth.

**December 26:** Boxing Day, a secular holiday celebrated in the U.K., Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and South Africa.

**December 26-January 1:** Kwanzaa, an African-American holiday started by Maulana Karenga in 1966 to celebrate universal African-American heritage.

**December 26:** Zartosht No-Diso (Death of Prophet Zarathushtra), a day of remembrance in the Zoroastrian religion. It is a commemoration of the death anniversary of the prophet Zoroaster, or Zarathushtra.

**December 26:** St. Stephen's Day, a day to commemorate St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, or protomartyr.

**December 26:** Feast of the Holy Family, a liturgical celebration in the Catholic Church in honor of Jesus, his mother and his foster father, St. Joseph as a family. The primary purpose of this feast is to present the Holy Family as a model for Christian families.

**December 27:** St. John's Day, Apostle and Evangelist, feast day for St. John, celebrated by Christian denominations.

**December 28:** Feast of the Holy Innocents, a Christian feast in remembrance of the massacre of young children in Bethlehem by King Herod the Great in his attempt to kill the infant Jesus.

**December 31:** Watch Night, a day for Christians to review the year that has passed, make confessions, and then prepare for the year ahead by praying and resolving.