

# ***Diversity, Equality & Inclusion***

## **DEI Committee Friday Thoughts**

*Published Every Other Friday*



### **December Celebrations**

#### **Hanukkah**

By Rabbi Gail Fisher, former CPE student

Hanukkah is a minor Jewish holiday based on historical events, which occurred too recently for it to be mentioned in the Bible. In fact, when the Ethiopian Jews were contacted in recent years, it was found that they had never heard of Hanukkah because they had left Israel before it occurred!

The Seleucid Empire (Syrian-Greeks) conquered much of western Asia. In 175 BCE, Antiochus IV became the emperor. Antiochus tried to suppress Jewish worship – forbidding reading of the Torah, circumcision and observance of the Sabbath. He also attempted to compel Jewish people to worship Greek gods instead. This culminated in the sacrifice of a pig in the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Sacred vessels were vandalized and sanctified oil was contaminated. The Jewish people rose against Antiochus starting in 167 BCE and fought for their religious freedom. They were successful in this endeavor and purified the Temple, ending with its rededication on 25 Kislev on the Jewish calendar. So, Hanukkah does have a fixed date, but it moves around within the calendar from late November to late December because the Jewish and secular calendars don't coincide.

Jewish people once found a tiny vial of sanctified oil that was expected to last for only one day. Instead, it lasted for eight days, long enough to press and sanctify a new batch of olive oil. It was miraculous. So, a lot of oil is consumed on this holiday – latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly doughnuts) being among the most favored foods.

Traditionally, children were given dried fruit and nuts to celebrate the holiday. Even in my childhood, we got 18 shiny new pennies from our Hebrew school and we got knee socks, hair ribbons and other simple things as gifts. Gradually, it's grown in this country to become a significant gift-giving holiday, so that our children won't feel so deprived as others celebrate Christmas!

Variant spellings that you might see in the name of this observance are because you're reading the name of the holiday as transliterated into English. It has only one Hebrew spelling!

There is an annual lighting of the national Hanukkah candles in D.C. on the first night of the holiday each year, conducted by Chabad on the Ellipse. This year, the first night was

December 7. You will be reading this too late to participate or watch it live, but this link can show you photos and tell you more about this ceremony: <https://nationalmenorah.org/>

**Learn more about Hanukkah:**

- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/hanukkah-history/>
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/hanukkah-101/>
- <https://aish.com/what-is-hanukkah/>

**Advent: A Season of Hope and Expectation**

By The Rev. J. Bruce Stewart, Director of Chaplaincy at GHA

Secular culture starts the countdown to the next Christmas after the sun goes down on Christmas Day. For Christians, Advent could be considered both the last days and the first days of that long countdown. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas (December 25), so it is not the same number of days each year. It could be considered the first days of the Christmas season because the first Sunday of Advent is considered the first day of the Christian year. It could also be considered the last days because it looks forward to the return of Christ to bring all things to their conclusion.

Advent is also a time of preparation for the celebration of the Incarnation, also known as Christmas, when God took on human form and was born into the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Today, Christians celebrate Advent as a time to invite Christ to be born again into their hearts and lives.

Advent is a time Christians observe with probably as much variety as they do Christmas. Do any two families celebrate Christmas the same way? Customs will certainly vary depending on one's native culture and location on the planet.

For some, the preparation may consist of quiet reflection, fasting, prayer, house cleaning, volunteering, donating to charity or other acts of offering and self-examination. Others may focus on decorating, baking and shopping as ways of expressing care for others. No matter which way, the sense is that we all have limited time to get our act together for the arrival of the long-expected Jesus, either as the baby or as Christ in glory.

The Advent custom of counting the days includes using Advent calendars, Jesse trees and Advent wreaths. Advent calendars may simply count the days, some may provide a piece of wisdom or assign a task. Others may invite creativity and participation (I like AdventWord.org). Jesse trees function as a genealogy for Jesus, revealing the lineage of faith of those who came before Jesus. Ornaments for each person are added daily and may be accompanied by readings and prayers.

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My experience of Advent from childhood began each year with the making of an Advent wreath, formed of evergreen pieces tied to a metal frame with four spots for purple candles. A large white pillar candle was placed in the center. The first purple candle was lit at dinner on the first Sunday of Advent. Each week, another purple candle joined those previously lit until all four were burning simultaneously. For some, a rose-colored candle is lit on the third Sunday to symbolize the joy of Mary being the mother of Jesus. At dinner on Christmas Eve, the purple candles were changed to white and the pillar candle was lit to represent the birth of Jesus. All five were lit at dinner every evening until January 6, the Epiphany, celebrating the arrival of wise men from distant lands bearing gifts for the baby Jesus.

Though I will never be completely ready, I hope and expect that the best is yet to come. Ready or not.

**Learn more about Advent:**

- <https://adventword.org>
- <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holidays/what-is-advent.html>
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Advent>
- <https://www.learnreligions.com/meaning-of-advent-700455>

**Kwanzaa: A Time of Learning, Family and Celebration**

By Charniel Page, HR Specialist – Benefits

To embrace the heartwarming week of Kwanzaa, families and their community come together, weaving a tapestry of cherished moments. Around a festive feast, we pay homage to our ancestors, fortify the bonds that connect us and exuberantly celebrate the vibrant tapestry of African and African American culture.

Each day holds a profound significance as we illuminate a candle, breathing life into the principles of Kwanzaa. We engage in activities that infuse these principles with meaning—whether through reciting the wisdom of esteemed black thinkers and writers, sharing original poetry, immersing ourselves in the rhythmic beats of African drumming or relishing a delightful meal featuring African diaspora-inspired foods.

In keeping with tradition, families incorporate essential symbols of Kwanzaa, such as the Kinara (Candle Holder), Mkeka (Mat), Muhindi (corn symbolizing our children), Mazao (fruit symbolizing the harvest) and Zawadi (gifts). Vibrant colors reminiscent of the Pan-African flag – red (symbolizing the struggle), black (representing the people), and green (embodying the future) – are a tribute to Marcus Garvey's vision of unity for all people of the African diaspora.

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Being relatively new to the celebration of Kwanzaa, I found myself drawn to the meaning and principles behind it. Over the past couple of years, I've integrated the significance of each day into my life in various ways through meditation and self-reflection. This practice aligns with the fasting time in my church and serves as a reset for the year, allowing us to focus on essentials such as our purpose (Nia) and faith (Imani). Embracing and understanding African American culture has become paramount, not only for me but also for my children, as we aim to pass down these valuable traditions to future generations.

**Learn more about Kwanzaa:**

- <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/seven-principles-kwanzaa>
- <https://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/>
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/kwanzaa-history-traditions-information>

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**Goodwin Living DEI Committee: Statement of Purpose:** Educate, Embrace, and Empower team members, residents, members\* and all served by Goodwin Living to support Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

**Goodwin Living DEI Committee Desired Outcome:** The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Committee (DEI) will seek open and honest communication and collaboration that will inform and celebrate the age, culture, ethnicity and sexual orientation of team members, residents, members\* and all served by Goodwin Living without bias.

\*Members include Priority Club members and Goodwin Living At Home.

**Questions or comments?** Please contact us [DEI@GoodwinLiving.org](mailto:DEI@GoodwinLiving.org).