

# Cycle of Seasons

A survey of holidays and  
holy days around the world

Betsy Hill Williams



Church of the Larger Fellowship  
Unitarian Universalist



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### **Cycle of Seasons**

Second edition.

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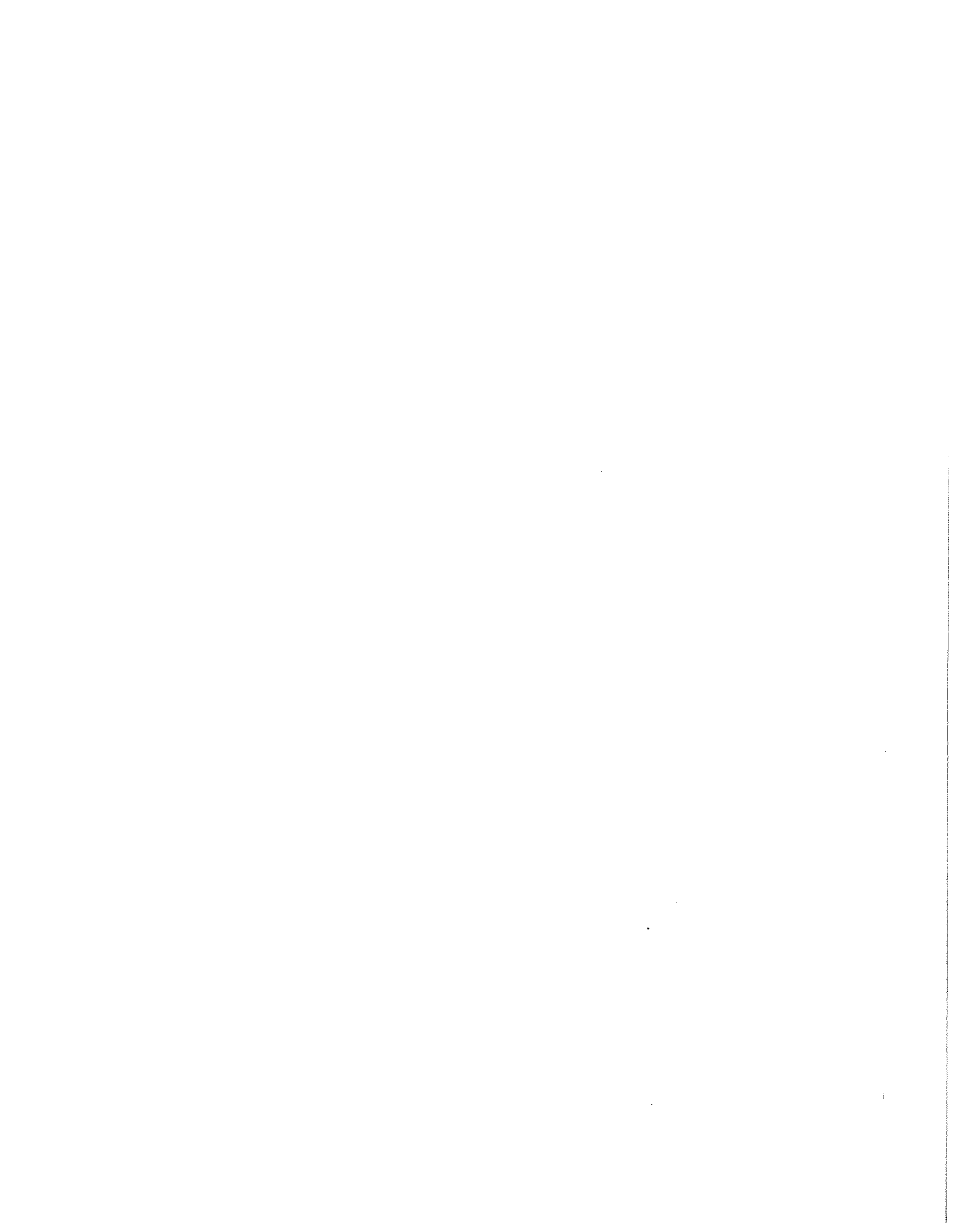
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## Introduction to the Second Edition

The religious landscape of the United States is a rich and varied one which has changed dramatically from the 1950's and 60's. The "different religions" encountered by most Americans at that time were different branches of Christianity or Judaism. Now, in schools and work-places all around the United States, people are working and learning side by side with ever increasing numbers of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, and Buddhists (to name a few).

Most people encounter this religious diversity for the first time not in a course of study but in their everyday lives, when a co-worker celebrates Ramadan, or a new neighbor wears a red dot on her forehead. A calendar of religious holidays and celebrations which mark the everyday lives of different religious groups seems like a good place to start feeling more comfortable with different traditions and learning about one another. Hence, this booklet, which is a survey, an overview of major religious celebrations around the world, placed in a seasonal context. Use it as a resource to look up a particular date, or learn about the origin of a particular holiday. If you and your family enjoy designing your own celebrations, the seasonal approach taken in this booklet will help you find similarities and connections between religious traditions, which are often overlooked or unnoticed and can provide a focus for your own celebration.

Needless to say, this does not list *all* religious holidays. Only the most commonly celebrated holidays are included, and even then the vast diversity of celebrations *within* religious groups is not addressed completely. Certain cultural events which are not religious, such as Chinese New Year, are included because of their visibility in life in the United States today. Some secular holidays, such as Martin Luther King Day, have been included because of their significant connection to Unitarian Universalism.

I hope *The Cycle of Seasons* will both answer and stimulate questions about your religious neighbors. From Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants who bring a rich variety of Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim traditions with them, to the recent revival of Paganism, Unitarian Universalists have only to gain. For we are a religion which acknowledges and encourages growth from genuine encounter and fair exchange of ideas. Religion is a work in progress and a journey for all.

Betsy Williams

*Betsy Hill Williams was the Director of Religious Education at the Church of the Larger Fellowship from 1992 to 2002.*

### **Note on the revision of the second edition:**

This revision has substantially the same content as Betsy's second edition. The table of moveable holidays has been updated. A very few minor changes have been made. Most importantly, *Cycle of Seasons* is now being printed so that it may be incorporated into a three-ring binder with other religious education materials.

— Dan Harper, Interim Director of Religious Education, October, 2002

## Marking Time

Since ancient times, people have measured the days and marked their lives by the cycles of the sun and the moon. Agrarian peoples around the world, aware of these cycles and their impact on human existence, developed rituals and celebrations to pay attention to--to *worship*--these forces of nature. As you will learn in this volume, many of today's religious observances are directly tied to these earliest celebrations.

### *Cycles of the Sun*

As long ago as 2,000 BCE people used stone alignments to mark the progress of the sun along the horizon and measure a solar year. Twice each year, the sun crosses the equator, making the hours of day and night approximately equal everywhere. These two days (September 22 and March 22 on the Gregorian calendar) are known as the Equinoxes. Half-way between the Equinoxes, when the sun is farthest from the equator, the hours of sunlight and darkness are least equal around the globe, creating the "shortest" and "longest" days of the year. These astronomical phenomena vary slightly from year to year, but are fixed on our calendars as December 21 (Winter Solstice and the shortest day in the Northern Hemisphere), and June 21 (Summer Solstice and the longest day). In the Southern Hemisphere, the opposite is true: the longest day is in December and the shortest in June.

### *Cycles of the Moon*

Every twenty-nine and a half days (approximately) the moon completes its cycle from new to full. The earliest calendars were probably based on lunar observations, dividing the year into twelve months. Religious authorities, or local leaders, declared a new month when they first saw a new moon. When it was impossible to see the new moon, the beginning of the month was determined by calculation. Since the number of days in the moon's cycle is uneven, some lunar months have twenty-nine days and some have thirty. The total number of days in a 12-month lunar year is 11 days short of the 365 days in a solar year. Some religious calendars add five days to synchronize the lunar and solar year.

### *Ancient Calendars*

A lunar calendar is not suitable for agricultural purposes because it does not keep in step with the sun. Hundreds of ancient calendars in such different areas of the world as Africa, Greece, Rome, India and China incorporated both lunar and solar cycles as they coincided with observations of local crops and other meteorological events. Celebration of the New Year often coincided with the Spring Equinox. In the ancient Celtic calendar, the days halfway between each equinox and solstice, known as "cross-quarter" days (November 1, February 1, May 1, and August 1), marked each new phase of the agricultural cycle. According to the Celtic calendar, the growing season, or summer, *begins* on May Day (May 1) and ends on Lammas (August 1), which is the beginning of the harvest season. The summer solstice on June 21 (Midsummer) is the mid-point between the two.

Romans used various lunar-solar calendars which were influenced by political considerations as well as agricultural. For instance, January 1 became New Year's Day because that was when Roman consuls took office. In 46 BCE Julius Caesar wanted to create a standard, predictable calendar which would be used throughout the Roman Empire and would

compensate regularly (with the addition of leap years) for the difference in the solar and lunar years. The result, the *Julian Calendar*, still contained errors which caused the actual occurrences of the equinoxes and solstices to slowly drift away from their calendar dates. In 1582, at the request of Pope Gregory XIII, astronomers finally succeeded in creating a calendar that can be formed for any year in advance, defined solely by numerical rules. The *Gregorian Calendar*, as it came to be known, was quickly adopted by Roman Catholic countries and eventually by most others as well.

### *Lunar Calendars Today*

Today most lunar calendars are used only to celebrate religious or ancient cultural holidays. The Chinese calendar, as well as the Jewish, Islamic and Hindu, are all lunar calendars. With the exception of the Islamic calendar, these lunar calendars are all synchronized with the solar year by the addition of an extra month at fixed intervals. The Islamic calendar does not compensate the eleven-day difference in lunar and solar cycles, so each year a given celebration takes place 11 days later than the previous year. This means that Jewish, Hindu and Chinese holidays move around the Gregorian calendar only *slightly*, whereas the Muslim holidays can fall at any time of the year. This difference is likely due to the fact that most Islamic observances are tied to the five pillars of Islam or the life of Muhammad, not agrarian cycles and events. So although Muslim holidays are based on lunar cycles, they are not tied to the cycle of seasons directly.

### **The Wheel of the Year**

“As the seasons change they turn the Wheel of the Year.” This phrase, borrowed from Neo-Paganism, suggests a way to conceptualize the various religious and cultural calendars in relation to the solar year and the Gregorian Calendar. At the center of the wheel on page 6 are the equinoxes and solstices, dividing the year into four quarters. Bisecting each of those quarters are the “cross-quarter” days, celebrated by ancient Celts and remembered today as Halloween, Candlemas (or Ground Hog Day), May Day and Lammas (or Lughnasa).

### *The Chinese Calendar*

The first ring out from the center is the Chinese calendar, which is based not on a religious system, but on ancient astronomical observations important to Chinese culture. The year is divided into 12 lunar months, starting with the first new moon after the sun enters the sign of Aquarius (January 21 to February 19). This is the *second* new moon after the Winter Solstice. The Chinese months are referred to as Moon 1, Moon 2, Moon 3, etc., through Moon 12.

### *The Buddhist Calendar*

The second ring is the Buddhist calendar, used primarily in Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. This lunar calendar begins at the *full* moon when the sun is in the sign of Taurus (April 22 to May 21). Some Buddhist celebrations are not fixed dates, but are set by local leaders based on observations of the current conditions, such as the end of the rainy season. Events in the life of the Buddha are commemorated at different times of the year by Buddhists in different countries.

### *The Hindu Calendar*

The Hindu calendar shown on the third wheel is a twelve month solar-reckoned calendar. The names of the months and holidays vary throughout the Hindu world, including New Year. Officially, New Year in India comes on January 1, but it is also observed on other dates according to the religions or sects to which people belong, and to the regions of the country. In Northern India the year begins in the springtime month of Chaitra, elsewhere on the first of Baisakha, the following month. For some Hindus the end of the year comes in the fall, at the dark time of the new moon of Kartika (October/November). Because of the great variation in calendar usage even within one country, it is best to consult local embassies for exact dates of Hindu celebrations in the local area.

### *The Islamic Calendar*

Fourth from the center of the wheel is the Islamic calendar. For purposes of this conceptualization, the 1st month (Muharram) starts with the new moon in May, as it did in 1997. Although holidays in the Islamic year are set in advance by calculation, official dates and times are set each month by moon sightings done by a local leader. Because solar and lunar cycles are not synchronized, the Islamic holidays move around the year.

### *The Jewish Calendar*

The Jewish calendar (fifth ring) is the last of the lunar calendars on the wheel. As mentioned above, days are added at regular intervals to keep the Jewish months (and therefore holidays) basically in step with the solar year. The Jewish New Year, Tishri 1, begins around the new moon in September.

### *The Gregorian Calendar*

The final outside ring of the wheel shows the Gregorian calendar, used today around the world. Not included on this wheel are the many other agricultural calendars in areas of Africa, Asia, the Arctic, and the Americas where local leaders set holidays based on complicated astronomical calculations, or events such as planting, harvesting, or even animal migration.

## **Where to Begin?**

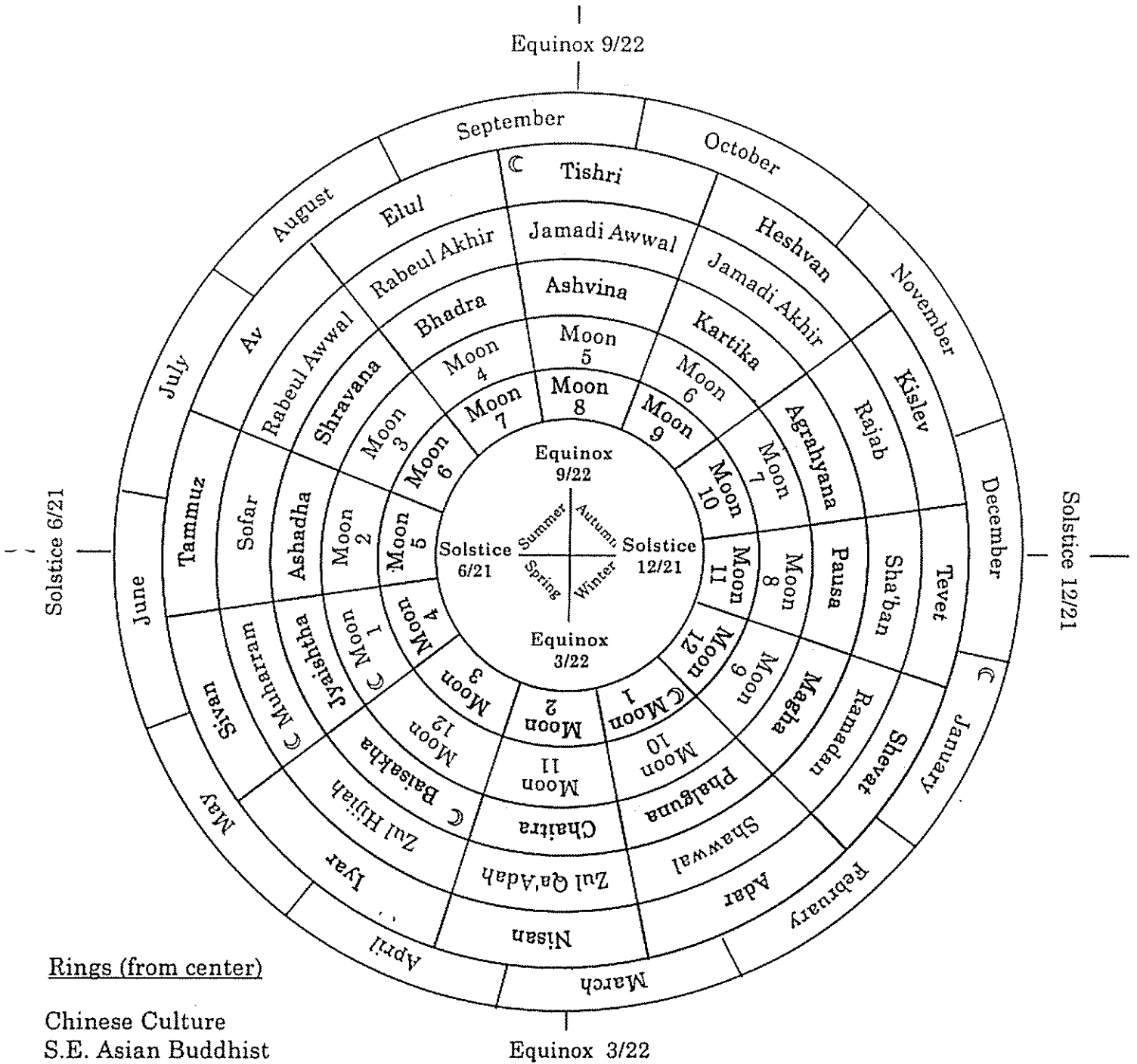
Each section of *The Cycle of Seasons* is devoted to one of the four quarters of the year. Movable holidays of each quarter, those whose dates on the Gregorian calendar vary depending on the lunar cycle, are listed first. Specific dates on the relevant religious calendar are given when possible.

With a cyclical view of time, the question of where to begin the year is a vexing one. Fall seems like a good beginning for many families and church schools, and so we will start off with the Autumnal Equinox, September 22. Obviously, if you live in the southern hemisphere, or in a tropical region, you will have to make adjustments for the different seasons you experience there.

Bear in mind this is a representative, not a comprehensive, listing of worldwide holidays and holy days. For greater detail about world religions and festivals around the world, see the bibliography.



# Sample Wheel of the Year for 1997



Rings (from center)

- Chinese Culture
- S.E. Asian Buddhist
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jewish
- Gregorian

\* Based on Islamic first month  
Muharram falling on May 8, 1997  
C Key to first lunar month

**First quarter: Autumnal Equinox to Winter Solstice  
September 22 - December 21**

**Movable Dates**

*Buddhist:*

Festival of Thadingyut: three-day festival at the end of monsoon season

During the monsoon season, which comes anytime between June and October in Southeast Asia, many Buddhists observe a time of penitence similar to Christian Lent. The end of this penitential time, which lasts approximately 3 months, is celebrated in different ways. In Burma the Festival of Thadingyut (Lights) is celebrated at this time. It commemorates the Buddha's return to earth after reaching Nirvana, when he descended to earth along a path illuminated by many lights. Homes and shops are lit, tiny lighted rafts set adrift, and fireworks may be set off.

*Chinese (Cultural):*

Moon 9, Day 9

Known as Double Ninth, Ch'ung Yang, Double Yang, or Kite Festival in China, Chrysanthemum Day in Japan, and Festival of Nine Imperial Gods in Singapore. This is a family day for climbing into the hills for a picnic and kite flying. In parts of Southern China it is also the autumn time for grave visiting.

Moon Festival or Mid-Autumn Festival: Moon 8, Full moon or Day 15 in some places.

Celebrates the end of the summer harvest with family fun: games, crafts, vendors, ceremonies and food, particularly "mooncakes."

*Christian:*

Advent: Begins on the 4th Sunday before Christmas

Advent, from the Latin word *adventus* meaning "coming," is the four-week period when Christians look forward to the birth of Christ, or Christmas. Originally a time of fasting and repentance, the customs of Advent now include the lighting of candles (one each Sunday and a fifth on Christmas Eve), making of Advent wreaths, and opening Advent Calendars. Advent also marks the beginning of the Christian liturgical year in Roman Catholic and most Protestant churches.

*Hindu:*

Dusserah: Full moon in Asvina

This is a ten-day festival beginning with the full moon in Asvina. It is also known as Durga Puja, Dasain or Durgotsava. The first nine days, *navaratri*, are dedicated to different aspects of the Goddess Durga, the symbol of motherhood. The Ramayana, a classic story of the triumph of good over evil, is read or performed annually during Dusserah.

Diwali: Kartika 1

Diwali, a shortened form of the word *deepavali*, takes place at the dark time of the new moon in Kartika, and literally means "a string of lights." Although different Hindu sects celebrate Diwali differently, the underlying themes of celebration are the same: the triumph of good over evil and honoring the Goddesses (Lakshmi in particu-

lar) who bring good luck, wealth and prosperity from year to year. The celebration generally lasts three to five days. People whitewash their homes and decorate them with little oil-filled earthenware lamps. Families and friends exchange gifts and candy. Fireworks are common and markets, streets and all public places are decked with small glittering lamps. In some areas a rite of mutual respect and love among siblings, called Yamma, is observed on the fifth day of Divali.

*Islamic:*

Isra & Mi'raj: Rajab 27 (November 26, 1997)

Also known as "The Miraculous Occasion" this night marks the night when Muhammad miraculously flew from Mecca to Jerusalem on a winged horse and then ascended to heaven.

Sha'ban Barat: Sha'ban 15 (December 14, 1997)

Also known as the Night of the Middle of Sha'ban, this is a sacred night on which Allah ordains the actions of men for the coming year

*Jewish:*

Rosh Hashana: Tishri 1 &2

The Jewish New Year begins a ten-day period of reflection and repentance during which Jews examine their lives, pray for forgiveness and ask God's blessing for the coming year. The shofar, or ram's horn, which was used to call people together in ancient times, is ceremoniously blown on the morning of Rosh Hashana. Other customs associated with Rosh Hashana are: a special dinner on the eve of the festival during which pieces of apple dipped in honey are eaten, expressing the hope that the coming year will be sweet; greeting cards sent to relatives and friends; exchange of the greeting "May you be inscribed for a good year!"

Yom Kippur: Tishri 10

The period of ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are known as the Days of Awe or Days of Repentance. The theme of these ten days is reconciliation between people as a necessary prelude to reconciliation with God. The asking for forgiveness must be accompanied by some form of restitution or resolution to do better in the future. The climax of these days, the holiest day in the Jewish year, is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On this day God opens the Book of Life and, after examining people's lives and their repentance of the previous ten days, writes a final decision on their future. The book is then closed until the next year. It is a day of prayer and total fasting from sunset to sunset. A memorial service for the dead is held as part of the day's service.

Sukkot: Tishri 15-23

The eight-day celebration of Sukkot is a harvest festival of thanksgiving, which also commemorates the forty years during which the Jews wandered in the desert from Egypt to the Promised Land. Because people lived in temporary shelters, the festival is sometimes called Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths and each family builds a sukkot, (a temporary booth or hut) outside their home for the festival. The structure is intentionally fragile to remind people that material things are not lasting and is decorated with branches, leaves and other local symbols of Fall. Meals are taken in the

sukkot during the eight days of the festival. On the eighth day, known as *Shemini Atzeret*, prayers for rain are offered so that good crops may be had in the coming year.

Simchat Torah: Tishri 24

Immediately following the last day of Sukkot, the year's reading of the Torah is complete and the re-reading is begun. It is a joyous celebration, sometimes referred to as Rejoicing in the Torah. At the evening service the Torah scrolls are held high and carried around the synagogue with children following, carrying banners and singing songs.

Hanukkah: Kislev 25

Coming near the end of Kislev, Hanukkah can fall either before or after the Winter Solstice. It is a minor festival in the Jewish calendar, known also as the Festival of Lights or the Festival of Dedication. Hanukkah (which means "dedication") commemorates the re-dedication of the Temple after the Jews, driven out by the Syrians, regained Jerusalem under the leadership of Judah Maccabee. According to legend, when the Jews returned to the Temple they found only enough oil to keep the Eternal Flame lit for one night. Miraculously the oil lasted for eight nights, long enough to keep the flame lit while the priests prepared more oil. In commemoration, one candle of the menorah is lit the first night of Hanukkah, two the second, and so on until all eight are lit on the eighth day. Though prayers are said with the lighting of the candles, Hanukkah is very much a joyous, children's festival...a time for games, songs and gift-giving.

*Other*

Harvest Moon: Full moon nearest autumnal equinox, so named because it extends the hours of daylight into the evening, helping the busy harvester.

Thanksgiving

Canada: 2nd Monday in October

United States: 4th Thursday in November

### **Fixed Holidays**

*September 22: Autumn Equinox*

The Equinox is a day of balance, when the hours of daylight and darkness are equal. Buddhists, who call this day Higan-e, believe that when the day and night are the same length, peace, equality and harmony can be achieved.

*September 28: Birthday of Confucius*

In China this is a national holiday designated as Teacher's Day. Confucius was born in 551 BCE, and died in 479 BCE.

*October 24: United Nations Day*

This day marks the anniversary of the United Nations, chartered on this day in 1945.

*October 31: Halloween, Reformation Day*

Halloween is the modern expression of Samhain, the Celtic New Year which began at sunset October 31. It was a time of divination and remembrance of the dead. The evening was filled with prankish merrymaking, bonfires, and rituals to include the dead

who the Celts believed visited the living that night. Many ancient customs have remnants in today's Halloween celebrations including carving pumpkins, bobbing for apples, parading in costume and asking for treats.

For many Protestants, this is Reformation Day, the day when Martin Luther, an Augustine monk, nailed his "Ninety-five Theses" to the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral in 1517 challenging the Roman Catholic Church. It is observed in many Protestant churches on the Sunday closest to October 31.

*November 1: Samhain, All Saints Day*

Defined in medieval glossaries as "summer's end," Samhain was (and still is for Neopagans) Celtic New Year's Day. As with many New Year's celebrations, the two themes of looking back (honoring the dead) and looking ahead (future-telling) are intertwined in the celebration of Samhain. In an effort to establish its authority and convert Pagans to Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church "co-opted" many pagan celebrations, including Samhain. In the 7th century, Pope Boniface IV proclaimed November 1 to be All Saints Day, a day to honor all saints. In Mexico November 1 is also Dia de los Angelitos, the day to honor all children who have died.

*November 2: All Souls Day*

This is the Christian day to remember *all* the dead. In Mexico the day is called Dia de los Muertos. It is observed by family gatherings and graveside visits and offerings.

*November 12: Birthdate of Baha'ullah (1817)*

Baha'ullah was the Messenger of God for this age of humanity in the Baha'i faith. Numerous works by Baha'u'llah and his appointed successors, his son Abdul-Baha and later Abdul-Baha's grandson Shoghi Effendi, guide the life of the Baha'i and their community. Unity and oneness—of all religions and all peoples—is the fundamental concept of Baha'i writings.

*November 15: Shichi-Go-San, or Seven-Five-Three Festival Day*

In Japan, this is a day of thanksgiving for the safety of girls, ages 7 and 3, and boys ages 5 and 3. Children of these ages dress in kimono, visit shrines and receive gifts of candy and small toys.

*November 25: Religious Liberty Day*

This is the anniversary of the 1981 United Nations declaration on religious liberty as a fundamental human right.

*November 29: Birthdate of Guru Nanak (1469),*

Guru Nanak was the founder of the Sikh religion.

*December 13: St. Lucia's Day*

A festival of light, St. Lucia's Day is a family celebration throughout Sweden. The oldest daughter in the family represents St. Lucia, the Queen of Lights. She gets up at dawn, makes coffee and bakes special buns with raisins called "Lucia cats." Then she dresses in white with a red sash and puts on a crown made of evergreens, topped with real candles. The candles on the crown are lighted and she carries a tray of coffee and buns to her parents room. Younger siblings, also dressed in white robes with special crowns, join her in waking their parents singing "Santa Lucia," and serving the food. Later in the day there are Lucia parades and dances. Young women go to hospitals and homes for the elderly to serve sweets and coffee. Lighted candles are everywhere, reminding people that the sun is coming back.

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*December 16: Posadas*

In Mexico the Festival of Posadas is celebrated on the nine evenings leading up to Christmas. *Posada* means “shelter” or “lodging” in Spanish, and Posadas is a reenactment of Mary and Joseph’s search for shelter on their way to Bethlehem. In every neighborhood, homes are decorated with evergreen branches and colored paper lanterns. In one home each night, a little altar is erected with a *nacimiento*, a nativity scene, with an empty manger. On each of the nine evenings, children march in procession with their friends and family throughout the neighborhood. Two children carry little clay figures of Mary and Joseph. The others carry lighted candles. They go from house to house as if they were Mary and Joseph seeking shelter. When they find the house with the empty manger, they celebrate with song, dance and best of all, breaking the piñata.

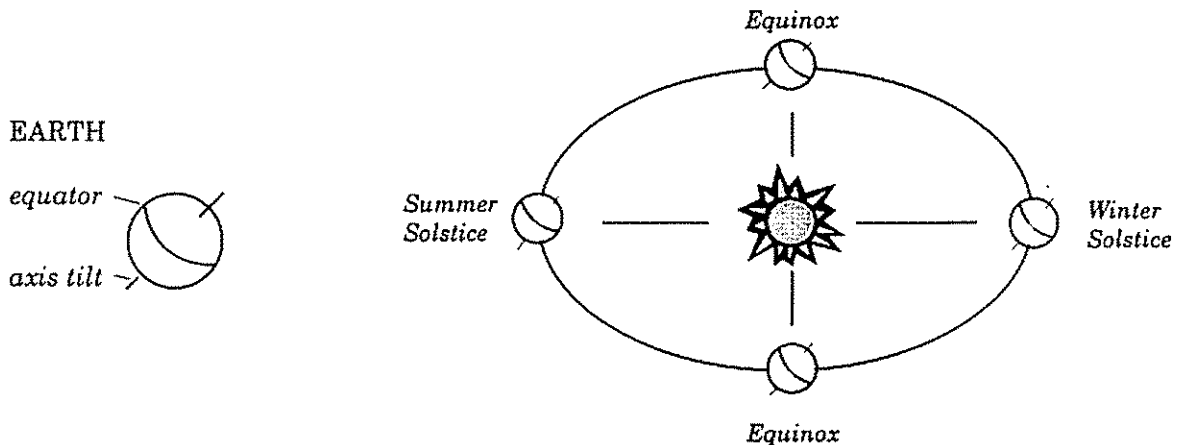
*December 21: Ysyakh, Winter Solstice, Yule*

In Russia, Ysyakh is an official national holiday, celebrating the midnight sun. There is much feasting and dancing in the Arctic night.

The exact time and date of the winter solstice will vary from year to year, but it is always near December 21. Ever since June 22, the sun has been rising and setting further south and thus staying lower in the sky and for a shorter time each day. Now the sun briefly “stands still” (the origin of the word “solstice”) and then turns north to lengthen the daylight hours once again. Light, in all its forms, is the central theme in both ancient and modern celebrations around the world this time of year.

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Equinoxes and solstices—



If you stand at the same time on earth throughout one rotation of the earth around the sun (365 days), the amount of daylight you experience will change. This is due to the tilt of the earth on its axis. Twice during the year, day and night will be of equal length (equinoxes). Between the equinoxes, there will be one day with the most daylight (summer solstice), and one day with the least daylight (winter solstice). Winter solstice is in December in the northern hemisphere, and in June in the southern hemisphere.

## Second Quarter: Winter Solstice to Spring Equinox December 21 to March 22

### Movable Holidays

#### *Bahai:*

World Religion Day: 3rd Sunday in January

Sponsored by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i of the United States, this Sunday is observed to "demonstrate the fundamental oneness of all revealed religion."

#### *Chinese (Cultural):*

Moon 12, Day 23 or 24

A week before the Chinese New Year, families in China say farewell to their Kitchen God, who is believed to have been watching all the good and bad behavior of each person in the family that year. The Kitchen God's picture, which hangs on the wall near the kitchen stove, is removed and ceremoniously burned, so that he can travel to heaven in the smoke and report to the Jade Emperor (great God of all) about the family's behavior. A week later he returns on New Year's eve to watch over the family for another year. The family puts up a new picture of the Kitchen God to welcome him back.

Chinese New Year: Moon 1, Day 1-15

This two-week celebration begins with the new moon after the sun enters Aquarius (sometime between January 21 and February 19). It is called the Narcissus Festival in some places. The narcissus symbolizes good fortune. On day 15 the celebration ends with the Lantern Festival and Dragon Dance.

#### *Christian:*

Shrove Monday: Monday before Ash Wednesday

This is a day of pastry treats and pancakes, as a reminder that butter and eggs must be used up before Lent. In Greece it is a fast day, called Clean Monday.

Shrove Tuesday, Mardi Gras, Carnival: Tuesday before Ash Wednesday

Similar to Shrove Monday, Mardi Gras means "fat Tuesday" in French, and Carnival derives from the Latin *carne vale* meaning "farewell meat." Celebrations are a final mid-winter fling before the 40 day (not counting Sundays) period of Lenten fast prior to Easter. This holiday is especially popular in Latin countries.

Ash Wednesday: Day 1 of Lent (February 12, 1997)

In Roman Catholic and some Protestant churches, ashes from palms consecrated on Palm Sunday (see page.....) of the previous year are applied to a believer's forehead in the sign of the cross with the priest or minister saying: "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." It is a sign of penitence which begins the Lenten period.

Lent: Six-week period before Easter

A period of fasting or self-denial as preparation for Easter celebrations. It is sometimes used as a time for special programs designed for religious growth and renewal, such as study-groups and special prayer meetings. These modern-day practices have roots in the second century when people observed a strict fast from Good Friday (the day of Jesus' crucifixion) to Easter morning. In the fourth century this time was

lengthened by the church to forty days (not counting Sundays)—from Ash Wednesday to Easter—commemorating the period in which Jesus is said to have fasted in the wilderness after his baptism.

*Hindu:*

Sankranti: Pausa, Days 1-4

Sankranti is a harvest festival celebrated in South India. Houses are cleaned and a special sweet rice dish called *pongal* is prepared and offered to the sun God and other local deities as an expression of thanksgiving. For this same reason, the *pongal* is also given to cattle and birds to eat.

Holi: Full moon of the month Phalguna

Holi is a happy Spring Festival which is celebrated in a variety of ways in different countries. It is an old festival which the Mongol Emperor Akbar made into a holiday that was supposed to unite the Indian people, who were separated by their caste system. Although customs vary, two common traditions are bonfires and colored water. The celebration often begins with an evening bonfire with drumming, horn blowing, shouting and dancing. When the fires die out, nothing of the old year is left. Throughout the next day people dress in green and spray one another with colored water or powder. The Holi celebrations can last from three to ten days.

*Islamic:*

Ramadan: 1 lunar month (began January 9, 1997)

One of the five pillars of Islam (five things every Muslim must do in his/her lifetime), Ramadan is a month of fasting when Muslims do not eat, drink or smoke between sunrise and sunset each day. It is a time of worship, contemplation and reading of the Koran, which teaches that fasting and prayer quiet the spirit and discipline the soul.

Lailatul Qadr: Ramadan 27

Known as the Night of Power when Muhammad received the revelation of the Koran in the year 610. In some places in the Islamic world, the evening is a noisy one with young men running through the streets exploding fireworks.

Eidul Fitr: Shawwal 1 (February 8, 1997)

This long-awaited holiday, known as the Feast of Fast Breaking, marks the end of Ramadan. For three nights, Muslims gather with family and friends for long meals and sharing gifts. In some Islamic countries Eidul Fitr is a national holiday. For many Muslims it is a time to celebrate a renewed commitment to their faith and to offer thanks to God for having seen them through the long fast.

*Jewish:*

Tu Bishvat: Shevat 15

The New Year for Trees, Tu Bishvat is celebrated as a harbinger of Spring. During much of Jewish history the only observance of this day was the practice of eating fruit associated with the land of Israel. In the twentieth century, the association of Tu Bishvat with the land of Israel has gained even more significance. Today it is celebrated with elaborate tree-planting ceremonies held by school children. Jewish children and adults from other countries give money to the Jewish National Fund to plant trees in



Israel on Tu Bishvat. Some celebrate with a Tu Bishvat Seder ritual of eating fruits and nuts accompanied by appropriate verses from the Bible or quotations from the Talmud, and drinking of white wine (symbolizing nature as dormant) and red wine (representing nature in bloom).

Purim: Adar 14

Also known as the Festival of Lots, Purim is a carnival-like festival commemorating the delivery of the Persian Jews from persecution and death in ancient times. The story of the triumph of Mordecai and Esther over the wicked local ruler Haman is found in the Book of Esther in the Bible. There are parties, plays and dances in which children wear masks and costumes to playfully portray the characters in this and other Biblical stories. On the eve of Purim, as the story is read aloud, children stamp their feet and twirl noisemakers at the mention of Haman's name. The following morning, the reading of the book of Esther is concluded with prayers of thanksgiving that faith triumphed over hatred.

### **Fixed Holidays**

*December 25: Christmas Day*

This day is celebrated by Christians as the birth day of Jesus. The facts of history do not reveal his actual date of birth and it is likely that this day was chosen because of its proximity to the Roman festival Saturnalia and the Persian celebration of the birth of the Sun God, Mithra. In both these ancient winter solstice festivals, the victory of light over darkness is the central theme, with merrymaking, gift-giving, singing, and bringing greens indoors all part of the celebrations. In 350 CE the Catholic church proclaimed December 25 as the date of the birth of Christ and for many years the birth of Christ, Saturnalia, and the birth of Mithra were celebrated side by side.

During the Protestant Reformation any celebration that was not sanctioned in the Bible was suspect and Christmas was nearly obliterated. However, observances of this deeply-rooted holiday continued with the religious aspects slowly becoming overshadowed by more secular elements. As an example, Puritanism particularly frowned on Christmas celebrations and it wasn't until the mid-1800's that Christmas was widely celebrated in the U.S.A.

*December 26: Boxing Day, St. Stephen's Day*

This holiday, from England, is still an official holiday in many countries. Originally it was a day when landowners took boxes of gifts to their serfs, and donations were collected in small boxes for the needy. Employers continue the custom today giving gifts to their employees on Boxing Day.

*December 26 - January 1: Kwanzaa*

Started in 1966 by M. Ron Karenga, this eight-day celebration is a uniquely African American holiday based on traditional African harvest festivals. Kwanzaa (which means "first fruits" in Swahili) centers around seven principles of African American culture: *Umoja* (unity of brothers and sisters in community, nation and race), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Juumba* (creativity) and *Imani* (faith). Each day one of the principles is discussed and celebrated by families and community

groups with stories, poetry and activities from African American culture.

*January 1: New Year's Day*

The Romans named the first month of the year after a god Janus, who was the Keeper of the Doors and Gates. Janus is depicted with two faces, one looking back and the other forward, symbolizing beginnings and endings. Popular customs on New Year's Day around the world reflect the two themes of reviewing the past and looking ahead.

*January 5: Epiphany Eve, Twelfth Night*

In many European and Latin American countries the Christmas season extends from Christmas Day to January 6, when the Magi arrived to visit the baby Jesus. Twelfth Night, the eve of this visit, has a history of merrymaking and revelry, as depicted in Shakespeare's play by that name.

*January 6: Feast of Epiphany*

The Feast of Epiphany in Christianity celebrates three worldly "manifestations" of the divinity of Jesus Christ, all of which were thought to have occurred at this same time of the year: 1. the Wise Men visiting the manger, 2. Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist, and 3. Jesus performing his first public miracle, transforming water to wine, according to *The Gospel of John*.

*January 15: Martin Luther King Day (Cultural) and Seijin-No-Hi (Cultural)*

The birthdate of Martin Luther King is a national holiday in the United States. It is a time to remember King's good works on behalf of people of color and of all people, and to honor all those who fight for human and civil rights in the world.

In Japan, January 15 is Seigin-No-Hi, Adult's Day, a day of celebration for those who reached the age of 20 during the year. Shrine visits and parties are common customs.

*February 2: Brigid's Day, Candlemas, Groundhog Day*

Known by many names and traditions, this "cross-quarter" day (halfway between Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox) has a rich history of celebration and meanings. On this day pagan Celts honored Brigid—a multifaceted goddess of fire, smithcraft, poetry, healing and spring—by lighting fires and sprinkling grain on them, shouting "Brigid, come!" Early Christians named the day Candlemas, perhaps from the Roman custom of going about by candlelight looking for signs of spring. Later, in England, Candlemas marked the official end of the Christmas season, when the Yule log was extinguished but a piece kept to light the next year's log. Today Christians (mostly Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Anglican) use the day to bless all the candles that will be burned on the altars during the year.

*February 14: Valentine's Day*

A folk festival which bears the name of the legendary saint, it continues the customs of the Roman spring festival called Lupercalia, a celebration of mating and fertility.

*March 3: Hina Matsuri, Japanese Doll Festival (Cultural)*

This annual Japanese festival (also known as Girls' Day or Peach Blossom Festival) honors young girls and their dolls and is now celebrated each year on March 3 rather than the traditional Moon 3, Day 3 date.

*March 17: St. Patrick's Day*

Ireland's greatest holy day and holiday, to honor its patron saint who brought Catholicism to Ireland.

## Third Quarter: Spring Equinox to Summer Solstice March 22 to June 21

### Movable Holidays

#### *Buddhist:*

Moon 4, Day 8: Birthdate of Buddha celebrated in China

Wesak Day: Full Moon in May

In Southeast Asia, Buddhists celebrate the birth, enlightenment and entry to Nirvana (death) of Buddha all on this one day. Activities range from quiet meditation to festive carnival-like events.

#### *Chinese (Cultural):*

Moon 5, Day 5: Double Fifth

An inauspicious day in Chinese culture, the hot steamy weather is said to facilitate growth of insects which spread disease, so precautions are taken against five poisonous insects: scorpion, viper, centipede, house lizard and spider.

Moon 5, Day 5: Dragon Boat Festival (Also celebrated in some places on June 24.)

Chinese people re-enact the search for Chu'Yuan, a well-known statesman and poet who drowned himself on this day in 403 BCE in the Mi-Lo River because, as a common person, he was unable to defend himself against charges of dishonor directed at him by an important prince. Today people dress in their best clothes and meet at rivers and lakes to watch boat races between long, narrow boats shaped like dragons.

Moon 5, Day 5: Tano, or Dano-nal (Cultural. Often celebrated May 5.)

In Korea Tano is "Swing Day," a beginning of summer celebration featuring swinging contests for girls to see who can swing the highest and kick a suspended ball. Years ago it was a day for making and painting fans.

#### *Christian:*

Easter: The first Sunday after the first full moon following the Spring Equinox (March 30, 1997).

Most likely named after the Germanic spring goddess Eostre, who was worshipped in ancient celebrations of rebirth each spring, Easter is the holiest day in the Christian year, celebrating Jesus' resurrection.

Holy Week: Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter (March 23, 1997) to Easter Sunday.

Palm Sunday commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem riding a donkey on a carpet of palm branches. On Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter, Jesus' last Passover supper is remembered. On Good Friday, the Friday before Easter, Jesus' crucifixion is remembered.

Orthodox Easter: Celebrated by Eastern and Greek Orthodox Christians one week later than traditional Easter.

#### *Hinduism & Sikhism:*

Baisakhi (Indian New Year's Day): Baisakh 1

Hindus in India traditionally celebrated this day at Harwar, where two sacred rivers meet a third, the holy Ganges. Sikh celebrations take place at the Golden Temple in

the city of Amritsar. Sikhs travel great distances to listen to singers, musicians and speakers, bathe in the huge reflecting pool, and make special offerings to the temple itself. For farmers in India, Baisakhi is the last day to relax before the beginning of the harvest.

In the Sikh tradition, the month of Baisakh is when the Khalsa (the fellowship of Sikhs founded by Gobind Singh, the tenth guru) was formed in 1699, and Baisakh 1 is an important day of remembrance and celebration for that reason as well.

*Islamic:*

Eidul Adha: Zul-Hijjah 10 (April 17, 1997)

The month of Zul-Hijjah is the month of pilgrimage to Mecca. One of the five pillars of Islam is a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's lifetime. One of the rituals carried out on Eidul-Adha is the sacrifice of animals, usually sheep, goats or camels. This animal sacrifice is done in remembrance of the near sacrifice of Ishmael, son of Abraham who was an ancestor of all Arabs and the founder of the sacred city of Mecca. A ram was sacrificed instead of Ishmael. In Mecca today, while some of the meat is eaten by the pilgrims, much is given away to the poor. In the rest of the Islamic world, a similar animal sacrifice is made by each household or neighborhood.

Ashura: Muharram 10

Celebrated by Shi'ite followers of Muhammad, Ashura commemorates the battle in which Imam Hussein (2nd son of Muhammad and leader of the Shi'ites) was killed. During the ten-day celebration, which begins on Muharram 1 and culminates on Ashura (Muharram 10), events of the tragedy are re-enacted through processions and a passion play called the ta'ziya. Shi'ites believed the leadership of Islam should follow the bloodlines of the prophet Muhammad. The Sunni disagreed and caused a fundamental split within Islam as well as the murder of Muhammed's sons.

*Jewish:*

Passover: Nisan 15

Passover is an eight-day celebration during which Jews say special prayers and observe special customs, but attend work and school. The central ceremony is the Seder, which is both a meal and a worship service held at home on the eve of the 15th of Nisan. The Haggadah, which means "telling," is used as an order of service during the meal to tell the story of God's intervention in freeing the Jews from slavery in Egypt. The youngest child opens the celebration by asking four questions, beginning with, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" In answering, the father (traditionally) tells the story of how God freed the Israelites from slavery as if it had happened to him, suggesting the importance that each generation of Jews relive the emancipation experience personally. Special foods symbolizing events of the Exodus story are placed on the often ornate seder plate. Passover is sometimes called the Feast of the Unleavened Bread since only *matzah* is permitted during the eight days of celebration to commemorate the unleavened bread eaten by the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt.

Shavuot: Sivan 6

Known as the "Feast of Weeks" (because it occurs seven weeks after the second day

of Passover) or “Pentecost” (the fiftieth day after Passover). Shavuot was originally a pilgrimage festival, marking the end of the wheat harvest. Jews would bring offerings of bread to the Temple to thank God for God’s goodness. Following the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, the pilgrimage festivals were no longer observed, and Shavuot was transformed into an historical festival, commemorating the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Customs during Shavuot include decorating home and synagogue with greens and eating dairy foods with honey, a reminder that the Torah has the “nourishment of milk and the sweetness of honey.”

### **Fixed Holidays**

#### *March 20: Carling Day*

*Carling* is an old name for green peas, one of the earliest crops harvested in the spring. A pagan custom is to have a meal of green peas on March 20 to welcome spring.

#### *March 21: No Ruz or Navrouz*

This is New Year’s Day in Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. In some places it is a 13-day celebration. People visit relatives and friends in freshly cleaned houses wearing new clothes. Candy and sweets for a “sweet” new year are part of the special dinner prepared on New Year’s Eve.

This is also the first day of the Baha’i year, observed from sunset on March 20 to sunset on March 21. The Baha’i year has 19 months, each 19 days long with four days added to the second to last month to equal 365 days.

#### *April 13-15: Songkran*

This three-day celebration of the Buddhist New Year in Thailand (known as The Water Festival) is a joyous welcome to spring. Parades feature gilded floats and noisy bands and enormous statues of Buddha that spray spectators with scented water. Girls dressed in traditional Thai costumes perform beautiful folk dances. The sprinkling of water is a form of blessing during this holiday. Children pour scented water on the hands of their parents as a sign of respect. It is a fun and happy beginning to spring and a new year.

#### *April 14: Yom Hashoah, Day of Remembrance*

On this day Jews and others remember the Holocaust.

#### *April 30: Walpurgis Night*

From the German “Walpurgisnacht,” this evening before Beltane (May 1) marks the end of winter and the beginning of summer in the Pagan calendar. As with Samhain (Halloween), the veil between the worlds is thin on this night and supernatural happenings were believed to be common.

#### *May 1: Beltane, May Day*

Historically, May Day traditions come from two primary sources: the Celtic Pagan celebration of Beltane and the Roman festival of Floralia. The foremost custom of Celtic Beltane was the setting of the new fire. Cattle were driven between two bonfires to purify and protect them, couples would jump over a bonfire as an announcement of betrothal and for good luck. To these rituals were added the customs of the Roman festival Floralia, “bringing in the May” and choosing a May Queen. Early in the morning (or the evening before) greens and flowers would be gathered from the

greens. Young girls, crowned with leaves and flowers, danced around the decorated Maypole and went from door to door singing. The May Queen, chosen from among the young girls, presided over the May Day festivities.

May Day today is celebrated as a popular spring outing in Europe where flower gathering, Maypole dancing and crowning of a May Queen are still done. In the United States, Maypoles and May baskets are popular traditions. Hand-made May baskets are filled with treats or flowers and secretly hung on the doors of friends and neighbors on May Day. A Maypole may be erected in a public space where children gather to dance. Each child holds a streamer which is attached to the top of the pole. As they move around the pole, the ribbons twine a many-colored sheath that comes unplaited again as the dancers go back in the opposite direction.

*May 5: Cinco de Mayo*

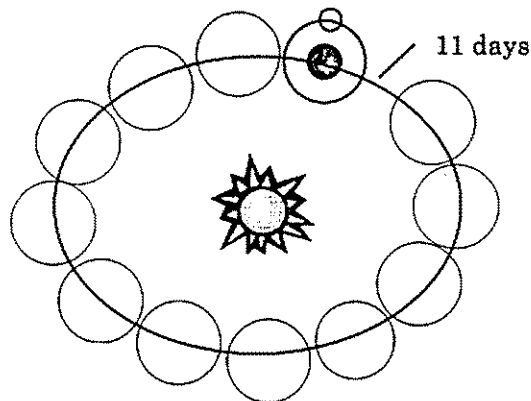
A Mexican holiday commemorating the defeat of Napoleon III in 1867. Parades and re-enactments of the battle with the French are followed by fun-filled fiestas with much music, dancing and the popular piñata.

*May 5: Tango-no-sekku, Japanese Boy's Festival*

Formerly Moon 5, Day 5, this celebration is now held on May 5 each year and is called "Kodomo-no-hi" (Children's Day) to include both boys and girls. Customs of the day include making carp kites (koi) for each child in the house and hanging them from a bamboo pole.

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### Lunar months and solar months—



A lunar month measures the length of time from one full (or new) moon to the next full (or new) moon. In the time it takes the earth to go once around the sun (365 days), there are twelve lunar months plus eleven days. For example, the Islamic calendar has twelve months. Months are calculated from the first appearance of the new crescent moon, and no adjustment is made at the end of the year. Because of this, the date of Islamic holidays, such as Ramadan, move 11 days earlier each year compared to the standard solar calendar.

## Fourth Quarter: Summer Solstice to Fall Equinox June 21 to September 22

### Movable Holidays

#### *Buddhist:*

Moon 7, Days 13-15: Obon

Obon is the Buddhist celebration of all the living and the dead, as it is said: "Everybody who has helped me to be what I am today and what I will be in the future."

Families visit gravesites and return to birthplaces. Special foods are offered to ancestors and lanterns hung outside to guide home spirits of the dead.

Moon 7, Day 15: Chung Yuan, or Yue Laan (Hungry Ghost Festival)

In China and Southeast Asia, the souls from Buddhist and Taoist purgatory roam the earth. Food is laid out for spirits, prayers said, and lanterns floated to guide spirits to a resting place.

Moon 8, Waning Day to Moon 11, Full Moon: Waso, or Khao Valsa

This is a three-month period of retreat for Buddhists which coincides with the rainy season. It is a period of devotions, sermons and daily visits to the temple.

#### *Chinese and Vietnamese (Cultural):*

Moon 8, Day 15: Festival of the Moon, or Mid-Autumn Festival

In China this festival, called Chung Ch'lu, honors the goddess of the moon. Mooncakes, a mixture of fruit and other sweets wrapped in a thin crust in the shape of a full moon, are made and shared among friends.

In Vietnam the day is called Tet-Trung-Thu, or Mid-Autumn Festival. It is a popular, joyful festival especially for children. Boys and girls make or buy colorful lanterns in various animal shapes or moon shapes and put a picture that tells a story from Vietnamese legend inside. On festival night the children dance and parade through the streets, swinging their lanterns and pretending they are taking a trip to the moon. Before and after the parade sweet moon cakes are enjoyed by all.

#### *Hindu:*

Janai Purnima, Raksha Bandhan: Full moon, Shravan (July-August)

Various traditions surround the wearing of a special silken thread on this day. For the three upper castes of men who have gone through the initiation rite known as the *upanayana* (thread ceremony), the sacred thread worn around the neck and underarm is changed on this day. A priest visits the home to perform the ceremony and to bless the new thread and tie it to the body. In parts of India, men, women and children of all castes, Hindu and Buddhist alike, have a silken thread tied around their wrists on this day (Raksha Bandhan). Three months later, on Laxmi Puja, it is then tied to a cow's tail. In some places, it is traditional for a sister to honor her brother on this day by tying the thread around his wrist for good health.

#### *Islamic:*

Mawlid al-nabi: Rabeul Awwal 12 (July 17, 1997)

For many Muslims the *mawlid*, marking the birthday of a saint or revered person of

the past, is occasion for celebration. Most widely observed of all is Mawlid al-nabi, the birthday of Muhammad. The Mawlid al-nabi is celebrated in a variety of ways. Special prayers are said in Mohammed's honor, cities and towns in centrally located areas are decorated with lights and banners, friends and family gather to eat sweets, play games and relax.

*Japanese (Cultural):*

*Moon 7, Day 7: Tanabata*

Tanabata, or Star Festival (now celebrated each year on July 7), is the night the legendary weaving girl and herd boy, lovers separated by the Milky Way, may cross the heavenly river and visit. In Japan children flock to the streets on July 7 carrying bright lanterns and colorful streamers. Branches of trees are decorated with long strips of pastel colored paper, or intricately folded paper flowers, stars and birds. Poetry which has been composed for the day is also hung on these streamers.

**Fixed Holidays**

*June 21: Midsummer, Summer Solstice*

European traditions use bonfires and water to celebrate the high point of the sun on this day. Later Midsummer Day became a holiday for young lovers to discover the identity of the person they would fall in love with and marry.

*June 25: Ratha Yathra*

On this day Hindus celebrate the beginning of summer and the transfer of the Lord Vishnu from his winter home to his summer home. People line the street to watch as a procession of enormous floats, models of temples with images of Gods and Goddesses, are wheeled by.

*August 1: Lammas, or Lughnasa*

On the wheel of the year, August 1 is the cross-quarter day which marks the beginning of the end of summer and the time of the first harvest. The early Christians celebrated Lammas (known in medieval times as Loaf-mas) by baking loaves of bread from the first harvest of grains and placing them on the church altar to be blessed. Variations of this ritual are still performed in some churches today.

*August 6: Peace Day*

On this day the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945 is remembered. Many people go to the Peace Park in Hiroshima and put flowers and necklaces of paper cranes in front of the Cenotaph, a stone monument which contains the engraved names of those who died in the blast. Children visit the Children's Monument, a statue of Sadako, one of the later victims of the bombing, who is lifting a gigantic golden crane to the sky. The significance of the crane comes from a Japanese tradition that says if a sick person makes one thousand paper cranes, that person will get well. In the evening Buddhist ceremonies and a fireworks display are held. Paper lanterns are carried to the river in a solemn parade and then floated on the river.





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### Acknowledgements:

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## Reference tables

### Equinoxes and solstices

The following are based on the northern hemisphere (obviously, spring and fall, and summer and winter will be reversed in the southern hemisphere). Times are Universal Time; check for local differences.

#### *Vernal, or spring, equinox*

3/21/03, 00:52	3/20/04, 06:41	3/20/05, 12:30	3/20/06, 18:19
3/21/07, 00:08	3/20/08, 05:57	3/20/09, 11:46	

#### *Autumnal equinox*

9/23/02, 04:48	9/23/03, 10:37	9/22/04, 16:25	9/22/05, 22:14
9/23/06, 04:02	9/23/07, 09:51	9/22/08, 15:39	9/22/09, 21:28

#### *Winter solstice*

12/22/02, 01:01	12/22/03, 06:51	12/21/04, 12:41	12/21/05, 18:30
12/22/06, 00:20	12/27/07, 06:09	12/21/08, 11:59	12/21/09, 17:49

#### *Summer solstice*

6/21/02, 13:11	6/21/03, 18:59	6/21/04, 00:48	6/21/05, 06:36
6/21/06, 12:23	6/21/07, 18:11	6/21/08, 00:00	6/21/09, 05:47

*(Data from www.scienceworld.wolfram.com)*

**Moveable Holidays** Below are the dates in the standard Gregorian calendar for some major moveable holidays.

#### *Judaism: selected holidays*

Since the Jewish day begins at sunset, all holidays begin on the evening of the day *before* the date shown here.

Jewish year—	5763	5764	5765	5766	5767	5768	5769	5770
Rosh Hashanah	9/7/02	9/27/03	9/16/04	10/4/05	9/23/06	9/13/07	9/30/08	9/19/09
Yom Kippur	9/16/02	10/6/03	9/25/04	10/13/05	10/2/06	9/22/07	10/9/08	9/28/09
Sukkoth	9/21/02	11/11/03	9/30/04	10/18/05	10/7/06	9/27/07	10/14/08	10/3/09
Simhat Torah	9/29/02	11/19/03	10/8/04	10/26/05	10/15/06	10/5/07	10/22/08	10/11/09
Chanukah	11/30/02	12/20/03	12/8/04	12/26/05	12/16/06	12/5/07	12/22/08	12/12/09
Purim	3/18/03	3/7/04	3/25/05	3/14/06	3/4/07	3/21/08	3/10/09	2/28/10
Pesach	4/17/03	4/6/04	4/24/05	4/13/06	4/3/07	4/20/08	4/9/09	3/30/10
Shavuot	6/6/03	5/26/04	6/13/05	6/1/06	5/23/07	6/9/08	5/29/09	5/19/10

#### *Islam: the month of Ramadan*

The beginning of the month of Ramadan is determined by the first appearance of the new moon. The new moon is predicted to be visible on the following days, and Ramadan will begin on the date indicated only if this is so.

Nov 6, 2002	Oct 27, 2003	15 Oct, 2004	Oct 4, 2005
Sept 24, 2006	Sept 13, 2007	Sept 2, 2008	Aug 22, 2009
			Aug 11, 2010

Other months in the Islamic calendar (calculate from Ramadan for other Islamic holidays):

1. Muharram (30 days); 2. Safar (29); 3. Rabi' I (30); 4. Rabi' II (29); 5. Jumada I (30 days); 6. Jumada II (29 days); 7. Rajab (30 days); 8. Sha'ban (29 days); 9. Ramadan (30 days); 10. Shawwal (29 days); 11. Dhu al Qa'da (30 days); 12. Dhu al Hijja (29/30 days).

#### *Christianity: the date of Easter*

Usually, Easter is said to be the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the day of the vernal (or spring) equinox. However, this is not precisely the case, because the ecclesiastical rules fix the date of the spring equinox as March 21, whereas the astronomical equinox can vary. Therefore, the date of Easter can never be before March 22 or after April 25.

2003 April 20	2004 April 11	2005 March 27	2006 April 16
2007 April 8	2008 March 23	2009 April 12	2010 April 4

#### *Chinese New Year*

These dates also apply for Tet in Vietnam and the Lunar New Year in Mongolia.

2003 February 1	2004 January 22	2005 February 9	2006 January 29
2007 February 18	2008 February 7	2009 January 26	2010 February 14