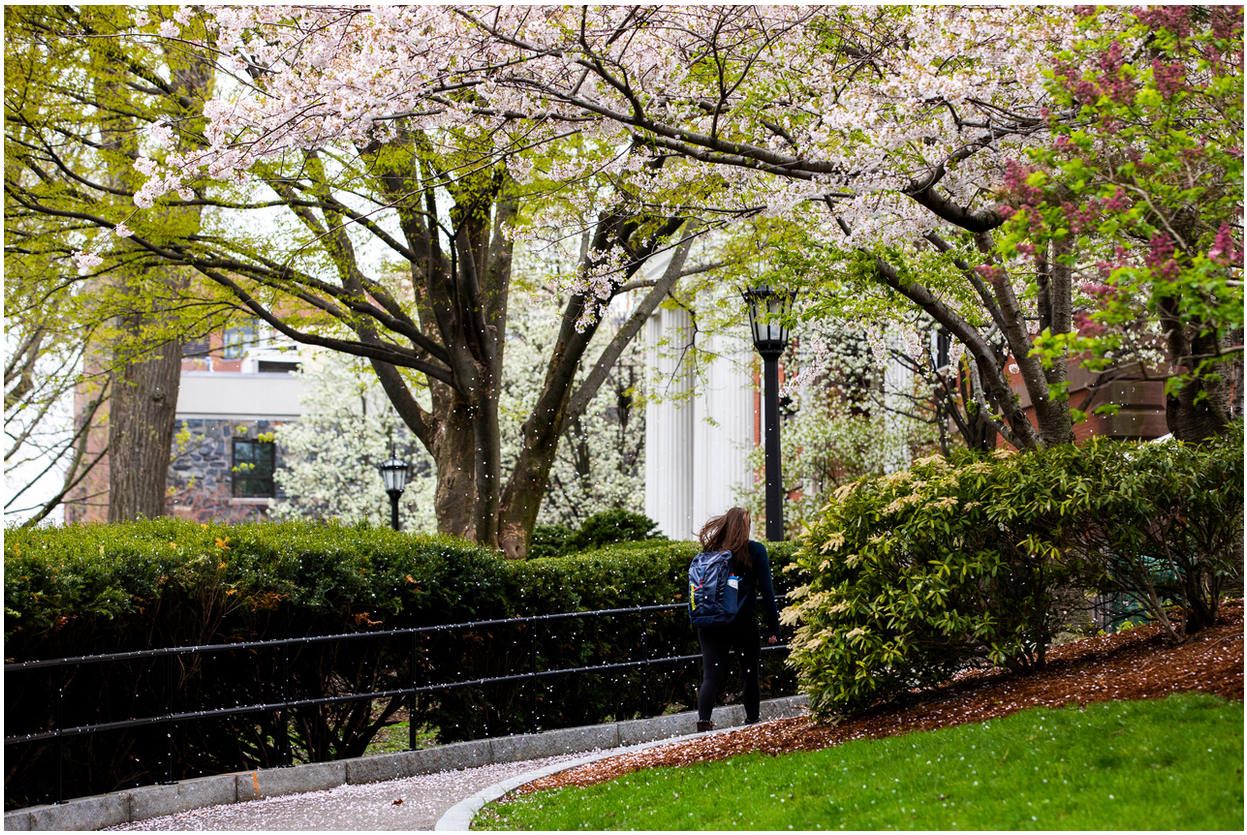
Tufts UNIVERSITY CHAPLAINCY

E-NEWS 4.14.21



A Ramadan Reflection from Our Muslim Chaplain

As-Salamu 'Alaykm wa RahmatuAllahi wa Barakatuhu —
May the peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you!

Muslims around the world are beginning their journey into the sacred month of Ramadan. I wish everyone, observing the month or not, Ramadan Mubarak (Blessed Ramadan). Once a year for the last 1400+ years, Muslims have partaken in a form of physically distancing with the aspiration of drawing closer to God and coming to better know ourselves. From dawn to dusk, we fast—physically, and hopefully spiritually—by distancing ourselves from food, drink, and intimacy. But, for the second time (and hopefully the last), this year's unique reality has social ramifications, disenabling communal itfars (dinner gatherings to break the fast) and nightly prayers. At risk of missing the spiritual opportunities, Ramadan presents additional complexity for the Muslim community, challenging us to embrace this temporarily trying circumstance in new emotional and spiritual ways.

I don't believe there is a one-size-fits-all spiritual practice, but I do believe that our spiritual and emotional states are inextricably connected. While living socially distant can sometimes feel like emotional asphyxiation, I have found it also presents an opportunity to slow down and turn inward—to figuratively double-click and examine--the things the high-paced frequency of life lets me overlook. As a spiritual season of approximately thirty days (because the Islamic calendar is lunar, months are twenty-nine or thirty days), Ramadan is the perfect opportunity for this work. Through our diligent conscientiousness about our bodily consumptions, we have additional energy to refocus on introspective inquiry and analysis, fortifying healthy qualities, and strengthening

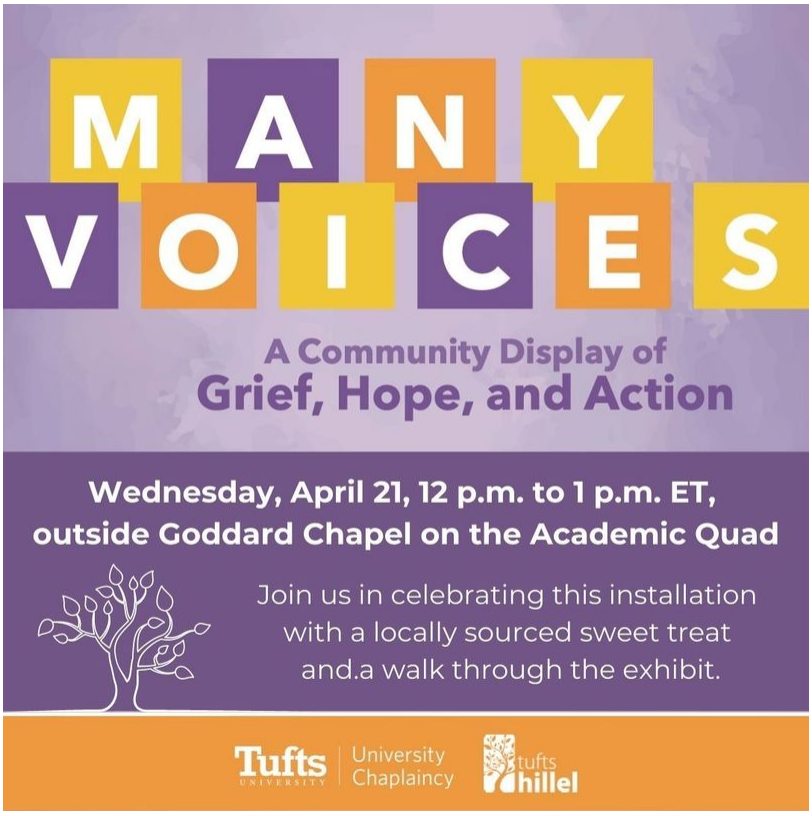
what needs improvement or cessation.

Regardless of whether you're Muslim or not, I invite you to use this time as an opportunity to become more familiar with yourself. What would you like to examine thoughtfully about your habits, patterns, or choices? Where are you seeking spiritual awakening or emotional healing? This invitation is essentially an invitation to be courageous because honest introspection is never without difficulty. But, as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Be diligent in what benefits you, seek God's aid, and do not tire."

Despite how we perceive our own capacity for courageousness, I pray we grow emotionally and spiritually and every way possible beyond our imaginations. I pray we surface from this current temporary reality existentially healthier and more whole.

I pray we all have a Ramadan Mubarak. Amen!

Imam Abdul-Malik Merchant
Muslim Chaplain



Celebrating the Opening of "Many Voices: A Community Display of Grief, Hope, and Action"
Wednesday, April 21, In-Person on the Academic Quad outside Goddard Chapel, 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. ET

On Wednesday, April 21, celebrate the opening of the "Many Voices: A Community Display of Grief, Hope, and Action" with the Tufts University Chaplaincy. Stop by the Academic Quad outside Goddard Chapel for a locally sourced, individually packaged sweet treat and take a walk through our communally constructed art exhibition. This exhibit will be open for our community to visit from Friday, April 16 to Wednesday, May 5 on the Academic Quad between Goddard Chapel and Ballou Hall. Please see this website for updates on the exhibition as it is installed and the images of submissions from the Tufts community, near and far.

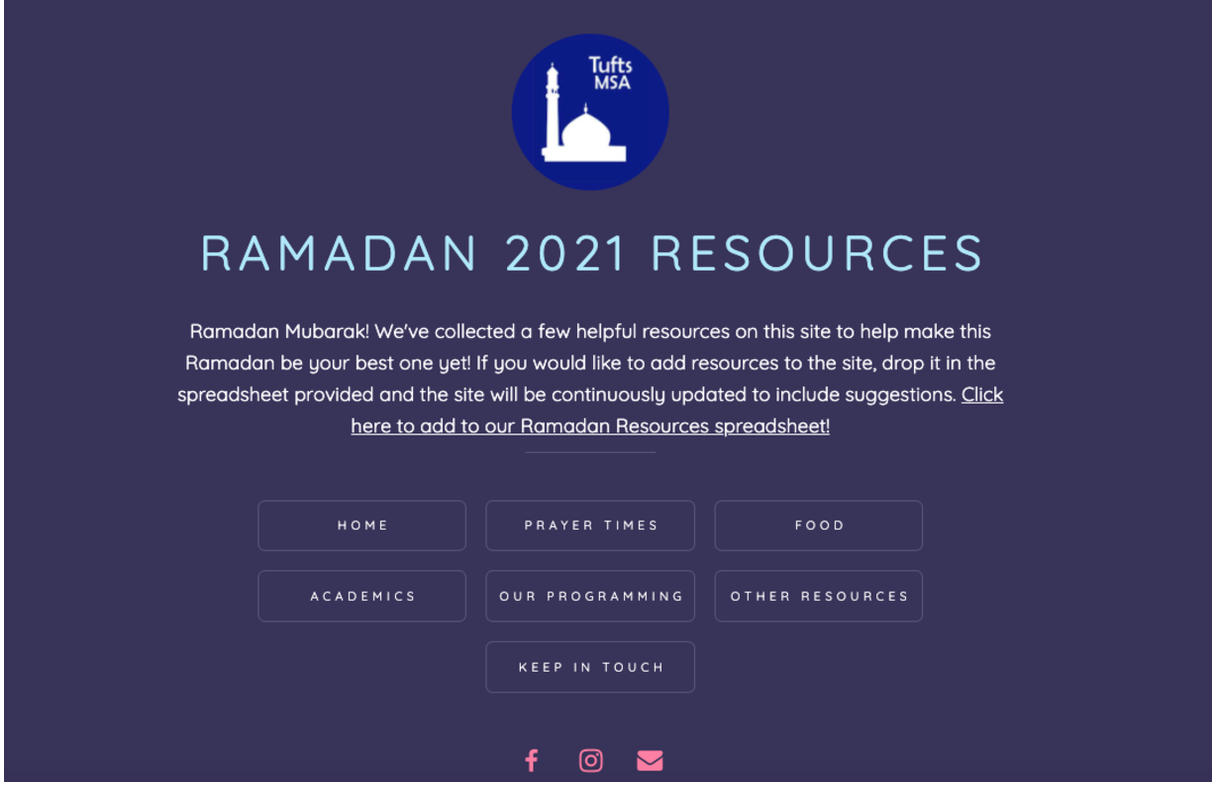
Upholding Home: An Interfaith Exploration of Housing (In)justice within our Community
Saturday, April 24, 10:00 a.m - 4:00 p.m ET

Guided by the tenants of interfaith activism and the experiences of different expert voices, this workshop will engage Tufts students around the intersectional issues of housing injustice in our Somerville and Medford communities. It will be a space to deeply reflect on our relationships to land, faith, environment, and feelings of belonging. The goal is to ground participants within the community and to empower one another to act through connecting ourselves to a broad range of local organizations working on comprehensive solutions to combat housing injustice. Meals, snacks, and supplies will be available for pick up in front of Goddard Chapel. Register here. Please contact University Chaplain Elyse Nelson Winger with any questions.

Religious and Philosophical Life Programs

You can find more information about our many weekly gatherings and student group meetings on our website. You can also find the Zoom links for all events and gatherings there. In this section this week, we highlight events and offerings from our chaplaincies. You can always reach out to the chaplain listed for more information, or find details on our website. If you have an idea for how University Chaplaincy programming can better serve you, please contact program manager Nora Bond.

See Our Weekly Gatherings



Tufts MSA's Ramadan Resource List

Ramadan Mubarak! The holy month of Ramadan begins this week. Over the past year, the Muslim Student Association at Tufts has collected a few helpful resources on this site to help make this Ramadan be Click here to access our full resource list. If you have questions or concerns about observing Ramadan this year, please reach out to Muslim Chaplain Abdul-Malik Merchant.

"The Healing Gaze: Luminosity & Vitality in Face-to-Face Encounters With Professor Melila Hellner-Eshed"
Sunday, April 18, 12:00 p.m ET

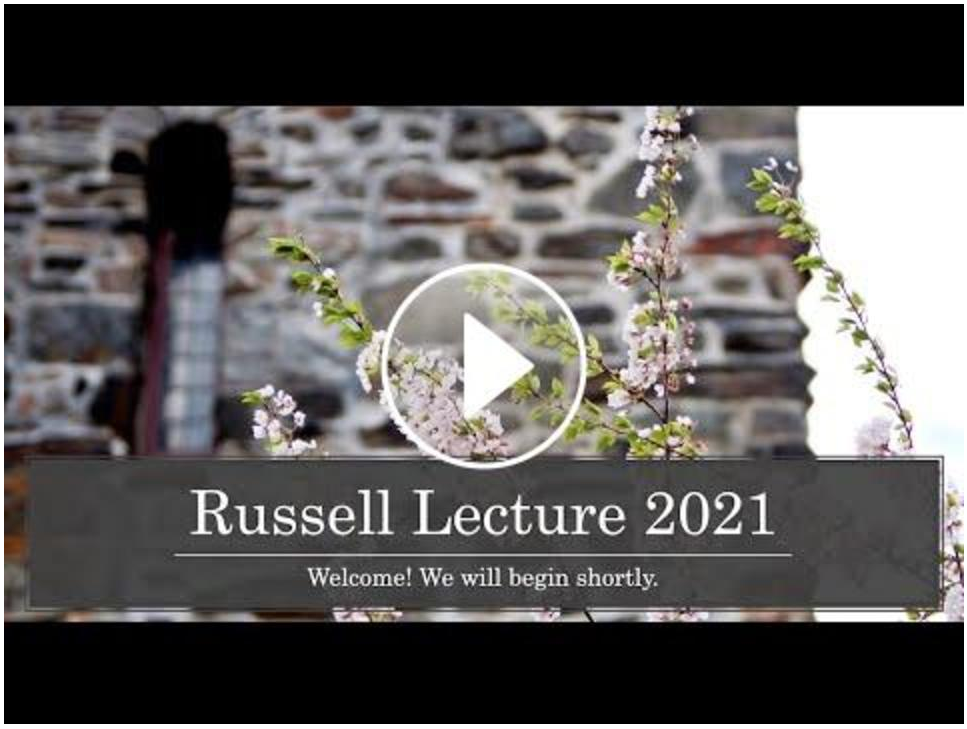
Join Tufts Hillel for the Susan J. Feigenbaum, J76 Lecture, "The Healing Gaze" with Professor Melila Hellner-Eshed. Gazing into the face of another has profound implications on the psychological and sociological planes. Human beings need face-to-face contact to thrive. Exploring this phenomenon through a mystical Jewish lens, Professor Hellner-Eshed will shed light on the centrality of the face in both human and Divine encounters. You can register for the event here.

Interfaith Shabbat with Tufts Hillel
Friday, April 23, 6:00 p.m ET

Join Tufts Hillel for Interfaith Shabbat. Share a meal with students of all faiths at a friendly outdoor picnic, to meet new people and discuss your own faith and traditions. People of all religious and philosophical backgrounds are welcome. The first 25 people to register will get a Grubhub giftcard, and all participants can register for and pickup a free meal provided by Hillel. We will be forming groups of less than 10 people to ensure that social distancing practices are followed. Register here for the event.

Next Amar Chitra Katha Reading Group with the Hindu Student Council
Friday, April 23, 6:00 p.m - 7:00 p.m. ET

Amar Chitra Katha (ACK) is an Indian publisher of graphic novels based on biographies, religious figures and cultural stories, founded in 1967 by Anant Pai. Largely a response to supporting children in learning about their heritage, the series also has equally engaged older readers in important conversations about their relationship to the content including social equity and gender dynamics. In April, the group will be meeting to discuss stories of Hanuman. Sign up to attend here or emai Hindu Advisor Preeta Banerjee to RSVP and to get a copy of the comic as available.



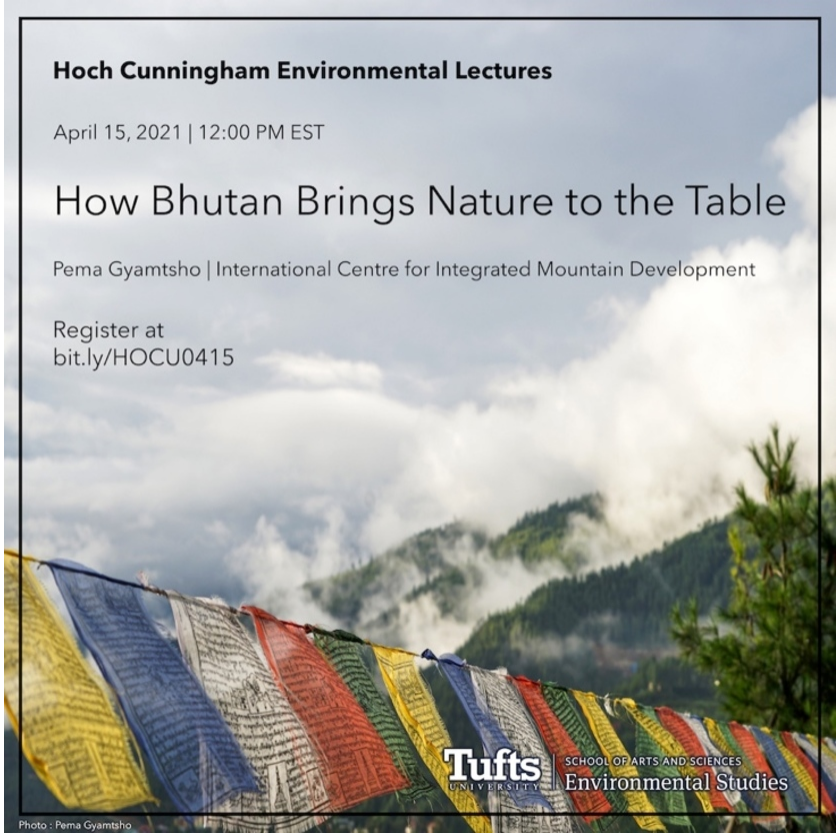
Russell Lecture 2021 with Reverend Adam Russell Taylor
Recording now available

This year, we hosted Reverend Adam Russell Taylor, President of Sojourners, a non-profit organization committed to “faith in action for social justice," for our annual Russell Lecture. Rev. Taylor's address is entitled, "The Work Ahead: Building a Just, Beloved Community." The dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism have created an inflection moment in which we must rigorously ask what kind of nation we want to be and to rededicate ourselves to the work of building a radically more just and inclusive nation. In the midst of our polarized nation, the moral vision of the Beloved Community is both timely and transformational. In this address, Rev. Taylor outlined ways to build a more just Beloved Community, with a particular emphasis on the spiritual underpinnings of justice work. The address is followed by a student-moderated Q&A. You can find the full recording on the University Chaplaincy's YouTube page.

Partner Programs

Community, Activism, and Black Trans Women in Leadership
Thursday, April 15, 6:00 p.m. ET

Join the Tufts community in a conversation with Elle Hearns, founder of the hugely impactful Marsha P. Johnson Institute (MPJI). MPJI is a Black Trans-led organization committed to protecting the human rights of Black transgender people through transformative leadership, healing, organizing, and direct action, following the legacy of Marsha P. Johnson. Hearns will be sharing with the Tufts community her experience, wisdom, and advice around activism and community. You can register for the event here. This event is co-sponsored by the Division of Student Diversity & Inclusion, Office of the Chief Diversity Officers, AS&E Diversity Fund, AS&E Dean of Student Affairs, Office for Campus Life, University Chaplaincy, and Tisch College.



Hoch Cunningham Environmental Lecture: How Bhutan Brings Nature to the Table
Thursday, April 15, 6:00 p.m. ET

The Tufts Environmental Studies department is hosting former Minister of Agriculture and Forests of the Royal Government of Bhutan, Dr. Pema Gyamtsho. Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, former Minister of Agriculture and Forests of the Royal Government of Bhutan will give an overview of Bhutan's geography, history, polity and the development philosophy of Gross National Happiness and Environment. He will discuss how Bhutanese view mountains, lakes, springs, trees and animals as living sentient beings and how Bhutan's national policy and international representations take these beliefs into account. Finally, he will address the challenges and the path forward for Bhutan to continue to live with nature into the 21st century. You can register for the lecture here.

Activism Through Art: Merrin Moral Voices Keynote
Thursday, April 15, 7:00 p.m ET

Throughout the year, Moral Voices has examined activism and how Tufts students can best fight for the issues they care about. We've examined various tactics employed to foster change. For our final event, we will highlight how artistic expression can be a mechanism to generate action. Artists Aysha Upchurch and Krystle Brown will discuss the techniques they use to integrate social justice messaging into their work. We will complement this perspective by showcasing social justice art from the Tufts community. All are welcome. Register here.

Resources, Scholarships, and Opportunities

Seeking Community Building Fellows
Deadline: Thursday, April 15

The Community Building Fellowship is a year-long program of students working to engage Jews from all backgrounds and interests across campus, sponsored by Tufts Hillel. The group meets weekly in cohorts where you eat lunch, get to know each other, and design opportunities for innovative and meaningful Jewish community on campus. And Hillel pays for you to take people out to coffee! Fellows meet once a week for an hour throughout the year. Additionally, you will spend 2-3 hours a week taking friends and acquaintances out to coffee to learn about their interests and their Jewish journeys, and developing meaningful ways to bring those people together in Jewish community. Apply here. For any additional questions, please reach out to Interim Director of Community Building Elizabeth Aeschlimann.

Graduate Students: Apply to be a StAAR Academic Mentor or Writing Consultant
Deadline: Sunday, April 25

The StAAR Center is now accepting applications from graduate students to be Academic Mentors or Writing Consultants. Graduate Academic Mentors are responsible for providing one-on-one and group academic skills coaching to graduates and undergraduates and leading both academic skills workshops and workshops in their area of disciplinary expertise. Graduate Writing Consultants work one-to-one with both undergraduate and graduate students on a variety of writing activities. Students from all disciplines are welcome to apply. To learn more and apply, please follow this link.

American Learning Institute for Muslims Summer Program 2021
Program runs July 25 to August 14

The American Learning Institute for Muslims (ALIM) has decided to make their Summer Program in-person in Canton, Michigan. The ALIM Summer Program is an intensive three-week retreat seeking to educate and empower Muslims with the requisite knowledge to understand their religion in the light of a changing world. The curriculum addresses traditional subjects such as Fiqh, Tafsir, and Sirah as well as contemporary issues in courses like Islam in America, Modernism, Sectarianism, and Liberalism. To learn about this unique program and register for the program, click here to visit their website.

Interfaith for Rookies: A Two-Part Training (Part 1)
Tuesday, May 4, 1:00 p.m. ET

Are you a total interfaith newbie? Rather than teach you what interfaith is via PowerPoint slides, the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) would rather show you what interfaith is through dynamic discussion. Join fellow rookies for conversation that courageously and compassionately explores our religious diversity and how to leverage that diversity for the common good. Please note that you must attend both sessions since they build on one another, and this registration is for Part 1.

Upcoming Religious Celebrations and Observances

These events are drawn from the multifaith calendar maintained by the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at Harvard Divinity School. To see more upcoming religious holidays and festivals, please follow the link to the Harvard Divinity School calendar. See below for a Tufts community member's personal excperience of an observance listed here.

Great Lent
Ongoing through Friday, 4.30.2021
Tradition: Christianity-Orthodox
In Orthodox churches, the first day of Lent marks the beginning of the Great Fast, the final six weeks of a 10-week period leading up to Holy Week and Easter (Pascha). In the churches that follow the Gregorian calendar, Lent is a six-week observance (40 days excluding Sundays) beginning with Ash Wednesday and culminating in Holy Week. It is a time of repentance and sacrifice in preparation for Easter.

Ramadan
Ongoing through Wednesday, 5.12.2021
Tradition: Islam
The Holy Month of Ramadan is the month of fasting during which Muslims who are physically able do not eat or drink from the first sign of dawn until sunset in honor of the first revelations to the Prophet Muhammad. The evening meal is celebrated with family.

Vaisakhi
Tuesday, 4.13.2021
Tradition: Sikhism
Occurs on the first day of the solar year. It is primarily an agricultural festival, celebrating the harvest, and is especially important in North India. It is named after the month Vaisakh. For Sikhs, it is also the anniversary of the creation of the Khalsa (the "Brotherhood of the Pure") in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh.

Vaisakhi
Tuesday, 4.13.2021
Tradition: Hinduism
Occurs on the first day of the solar year. It is primarily an agricultural festival, celebrating the harvest, and is especially important in North India. It is named after the month Vaisakh. For Sikhs, it is also the anniversary of the creation of the Khalsa (the "Brotherhood of the Pure") in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh.

Ridvan
Monday, 4.19 – Saturday, 5.1.2021
Tradition: Baha'i
Commemorates the 12 days that Baha'u'llah spent in the Garden of Ridvan in the last days of his exile in Baghdad, during which time he proclaimed himself as the one announced by Bab. Work is suspended for the first, ninth, and twelfth days.

Ramanavami
Wednesday, 4.21.2021
Tradition: Hinduism
Celebrates the birthday of Rama, the seventh incarnation of the God Vishnu. The Ramayana, one of the Hindu epics that tells the story of Rama, is read during the previous eight days.

Mahavir Jayanti
Sunday, 4.25.2021
Tradition: Jainism
Celebrates the birthday of Lord Mahavira. Born with the name Vardhamana in ca. 599 BCE, he was later given the titles of honor, Mahavira ("Great Hero") and Jina ("Conqueror" or "Victor"), a title applied also to the other Tirthankaras.

Palm Sunday
Sunday, 4.25.2021
Tradition: Christianity-Orthodox
Celebrates the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, marking the beginning of Holy Week that culminates in Easter or Pascha. In some churches, Palm Sunday is combined with the anticipation of Christ's death and so is also known as "Passon Sunday." Orthodox Christians often observe this Sunday on a date different from the date on which Protestant and Roman Catholics observe it.

Beltane

Friday, 4.30.2021
Tradition: Wicca/Paganism
The final fertility festival, celebrating the Earth's fecundity and anticipating the power of the sun and the Earth in summer.

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ABOUT US

The University Chaplaincy is a dynamic hub supporting religious, spiritual, ethical, and cultural life for all members of the Tufts community. We provide pastoral care, support religious and philosophical communities, educate about spiritual and ethical issues in society and the world, and promote multifaith engagement.

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