

A Parish Celebration of
KWANZAA



By
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*“You shall observe the festival of harvest, of the first fruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.
(Exodus 23:16)”*

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Introduction

Every year from December 26th to January 1st, many African Americans enact a daily ritual as an affirmation of their cultural richness. This celebration is called **Kwanzaa**. Although its symbols and activities are expressed in the African language, Swahili, Kwanzaa is a celebration of an American people—African Americans.

Through the celebration of Kwanzaa we bring to mind a rich, beautiful and inspiring culture that deserves preservation in the minds and hearts of its heirs.

The name, Kwanzaa, is from the phrase, “Matunda va kwanza” which means “the first fruits of the harvest.” The African American celebration was founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana (Ron) Karenga, an African American educator.

In the home decorations in black, red and green are made visible. The **Nguzo Saba** (The Seven Principles) and the traditional Kwanzaa symbols are prominently displayed. At the evening meal each day, a member of the family lights a candle. Each member shares a brief reflection on the Nguzo Saba principle for the day.

On December 31st a **Karamu** (feast) is held for family and friends. At the Karamu there is singing, dancing and a variety of foods. It is an opportunity to celebrate Kwanzaa with a larger group than during the other days of the observance. Many families have the Karamu on the last day of Kwanzaa so not to interfere with the New Year’s Eve celebration and to incorporate the old tradition of the New Year’s Day feast with the celebration of Kwanzaa.

January 1st is devoted to the **watoto** (children). They are rewarded with **zawadi** (gifts) for the good deeds performed during the past year. The gifts should be simple and inexpensive. At the end of the Kwanzaa celebration, it is appropriate to make a clear and concise farewell statement (**Tamshi La Tutaonana**) of our purpose. We recommit ourselves to our struggle for greater unity and self-determination during the new year. We give thanks for the blessings we share, our children, our ancestors, our extended family and friends, and our rich heritage. We iterate the Nguzo Saba and dedicate ourselves to making each principle live in our individual lives.

Why celebrate Kwanzaa?

We celebrate Kwanzaa as a cultural re-creation and restoration for Diasporan Africans. The seven principles of Kwanzaa, if put in practice, can bring about the healing so necessary among African Americans. The celebration of Kwanzaa is a re-connection between Continental and Diasporan Africans.

The origins of Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is a synthesis of Continental African and Diasporan African cultural elements. This is to say that Kwanzaa is rooted in the cultural values and practices of Africans on the Continent of African and The United States.

The Continental African elements are a synthesis of various cultural values and practices of many African peoples. Kwanzaa is truly Pan-African in nature.

The name “Kwanzaa” is derived from the Swahili expression which means “First Fruits.” Kwanzaa is patterned after the many “First Fruits” or harvest celebrations that are the traditions for many African peoples.

There are five basic components of the African “First Fruits” celebration that we focus on in Kwanzaa:

- **In-Gathering:**
The foundational component of Kwanzaa is the in-gathering of people. Such in-gathering is derived from the African Harvest celebrations where not only the crops were gathered in, but also the people. This is a time of renewal, re-dedication and re-commitment to the bonds that tie us together as families and as a people.
- **Reverence for the Creator and Creation:**
The central focus of Kwanzaa is the reverence for the Creator and Creation. We are thankful for the fruitfulness of the past year and pray for prosperity, health and happiness in the coming year. We recognize that we are dependent on the grace of God for all that is good.
- **Commemoration of the past:**
Another focus is our commemorating our ancestors—those who carried the struggle, both in America and in Africa. We pay tribute to those who came before us who handed down the faith throughout the ages. We listen to family stories of faith and struggle. We model their strength and call on their spirits to guide us through the continuing struggle. Such ancestor reverence is very much like the veneration of the Saints, which is part of our Catholic tradition.
- **Re-commitment to cultural ideals:**
During Kwanzaa we re-assess our past practices of our cultural ideals. By cultural we mean the totality of our life patterns, i.e., the spiritual, historic, social, economic, political, creative, psychological aspects of our life behavior. We re-commit ourselves to the ideals handed down to us from our forebears.
- **Celebration of the Good:**
Though we are acutely aware of the negativity in our world, through Kwanzaa we focus on the Graces bestowed to us from God. We give thanks through creative expression, be it singing, dancing, poetry, feasting, or lively dialogue. We use all our God-given senses to express such creativity.

The Nguzo Saba

Umoja: Unity

To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.

Kujichagulia: Self-determination

To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves, instead of being defined, named, created, and spoken for by others.

Ujima: Collective Work and Responsibility

To build and maintain our community together and make our sisters' and brothers' problems our problems and to solve them together.

Ujamaa: Cooperative Economics

To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Nia: Purpose

To make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba: Creativity

To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani: Faith

To believe with all our hearts in our god, in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Tamshi La Tambiko: Libation Statement

The Libation is a tradition among many African peoples to enact before any important event or celebration. It is also a part of the Kwanzaa tradition. We pour Libation as a way to honor God, our elders, our ancestors, the saints of the Church, and the leaders of the Struggle.

We call on the Spirit of God to be with us. We use the Kikombe Cha Umoja: Unity Cup that symbolizes our oneness as members of the Christian family and the human family.

We pour water on the ground as a symbol of our promise to



nurture the land that God has gifted us with—land that bears food, minerals and other natural resources that we process to better serve us. It symbolizes our responsibility to nourish and nurture the natural gifts God has bestowed on us, to respect the land, water and air and all their natural resources, to replenish it, and to use those resources wisely and justly. The very act of pouring symbolizes the flow of God’s grace that spouts over us continually and imbues us with His Love.

In this Libation we honor the Saints of the Church, our ancestors and the leaders of the Struggle for Liberation down through the ages. It is appropriate that one the Elders takes the honored role of pouring from the Kikombe Cha Umoja.

After each invocation water is poured from the Unity Cup as we all respond in song.

Leader: To God our Creator who has given us the gift of life, we give praise and thanks, as we pour libation.

All: *Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.*

Leader: To our parents and all those who tell the story of our faith and heritage, we give praise and thanks, as we pour libation.

All: *Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.*

Leader: To our ancestors who blazed the trail for us and taught us how to live in dignity, we give praise and thanks, as we pour libation.

All: *Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.*

Leader: To Martin and Malcolm, to Garvey and DuBois, Harriet and Sojourner, Toussaint and Douglass, and all those who lead the Struggle down through the ages, we give praise and thanks, as we pour libation.

All: *Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.*

Leader: To the African Saints of the Church: Augustine and Benedict, Perpetua and Felicity, Martin de Porres and the Martyrs of Uganda, to Pierre Toussaint and Thea Bowman, Bede Abrams and James Lyke, for their intercessions on our behalf, we give praise and thanks, and pour libation.

All: *Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.*

Leader: To the family, “. . .the domestic church in which we learn who we are and whose we are and how we are to live,” we give praise and thanks, as we pour libation.

All: *Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.*

Leader: To the parish family with whom we gather in worship, service, and love.

All: *Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.*

Leader: In gratitude and praise we offer this prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Tamshi La Tutaonana: **The Farewell Statement**

Strive for discipline, dedication and achievement in all you do.

Dare to struggle and sacrifice and gain the strength that comes from this.

Build where you are and leave a legacy that will last as long as the sun shines and the water flows.

Practice daily, UNITY, SELF-DETERMINATION, COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY, COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS, PURPOSE, CREATIVITY and FAITH.

May the wisdom of the Ancestors always walk with us.

May the years end meet us laughing and stronger.

May our children honor us by following our example of love and struggle.

At the end of next year, may we gather again in larger numbers, with greater achievement and closer to liberation and a higher level of human life.

Suggestions on how to celebrate Kwanzaa

On each day between Christmas and New Years Day, family members and friends should follow the following format:

- Gather together.
- Light a candle.
- Say a prayer of thanksgiving.
- One person states the principle of the day and its definition.
- Each person shares briefly on the principle of the day.
- One person reads the suggested Scripture for the day.
- All share a drink of fruit juice from one cup as a symbol of their family unity.
- Close with the Lord's Prayer.



Use the suggested focus statements and Scriptures for each day.

December 26:

Umoja (OO-MO-JAH) Unity

To strive for and maintain unity in the family and community.

Focus: Invite all to gather together and hold hands. Thank God for your many blessings and sorrows. Each member of the group will then share one blessing or sorrow that brought you closer to your loved ones.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-6

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

December 27:

Kujichagulia (KOO-JEE-CHAH-GOO-LEE-YAH) Self-determination

To define ourselves, name ourselves and speak for ourselves, instead of being defined, named and spoken for by others.

Focus: Invite all to briefly share an instance where they overcame or wish they had overcome pressure from others to do something they felt was wrong or out of character for them.

Or

Each person says their name and give three words that best describe them.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."

Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

December 28:

Ujima (OO-JEE-MAH) Collective Work and Responsibility

To build and maintain our community together and make our sisters' and brothers' problems our problems and to solve them together.

Focus: Share instances where we have worked for the benefit of others, e.g. church or community volunteering, P.T.O., political work, charities, household chores, babysitting, etc. Or

Identify a family project or problem. Decide as a group how to complete or solve it together.

Scripture: Thessalonians 5:11-24

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing. But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

December 29:

Ujamaa (OO-JAH-MAH) COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS

To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Focus: Share instances where we give (or would like to give) to others, e.g., siblings, parents, neighbors, friends, classmates, etc.

Scripture: Mark 12:38-44

As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny.

Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

December 30:

Nia (*NEE-YAH*) Purpose

To make our collective vocation the continued building and developing our community.

Focus: Share as a group on what you stand for as a family or group. What are your deepest values? Have one of the elders of the group share a story from the family history.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4-31

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of

healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

December 31:

Kuumba (KOO-OOM-BAH) Creativity

To do always as much as we can, in the best way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Focus: Each person share on what they do or can do to make our community, parish, neighborhood, or home a more pleasant place to live in. Or
Share poetry, art work, or anything that displays the creativity in the group.

Scripture: Psalms 33:1-3

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous. Praise befits the upright. Praise the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings. Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

January 1:

Imani (EE-MAH-NEE) Faith

To believe with all our hearts in our parents, our teachers, our children, and our God. To believe in the righteousness and victory of our struggle for peace, justice, and human equality.

Focus: Each person share one way they see God working in their lives. Or
Each person answer the question:
What do I see God asking me to do to make our world a better place?

Scripture: Matthew 17:14-20

When they came to the crowd, a man came to him, knelt before him, and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him."

Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me." And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly.

Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

Kwanzaa Symbols

MAZAO (MAH-ZOW)

Crops

Fresh fruit and vegetables

MKEKA (MM-KAY-KAH)

Place Mat

The foundation upon which all the Kwanzaa symbols are placed.

KINARA (KEE-NAH-RAH)

Candle Holder

Holds seven candles: one black placed in the center, three red placed on the left, three green placed on the right.

VIBUNZI (VEE-BOON-ZEE)

Ears of Corn

Represents the number of children in the family or home.

KIKOMBE CHA UMOJA

(KEE-KOM-BAY CHAH OO-MO-JAH)

Communal Unity Cup

Used to pour drink honoring our ancestors (Libation) and reinforce family unity.

MISHUMAA SABA

(MEE-SHOO-MAH SAH-BAH)

The Seven Candles

Represents the Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles)

All symbols should be placed conspicuously on a low table or on the floor in the dining room, living room or kitchen.

Kwanzaa Greetings

During Kwanzaa we greet each other in Swahili:

“Habari gani?”

“What’s happening?”

“Umoja!”

“Unity!”

“Habari gani?”

“What’s happening?”

“Kujichagulia!”

“Self-determination!”

Kwanzaa Colors

The official colors are *red, black and green*.

Red is for the continuing struggle for liberation, and the bloodshed throughout the world for peace and justice.

Black is for the people of color whose ancestors were brought to this country as slaves.

Green is for the children, our hope for the future that we shall build together.

Kwanzaa Decorations

Black, red and green combinations are used to decorate the home or gathering place with original creative items. Suggested items include African American or traditional African art, paintings and carvings, cut up designs out of inexpensive crepe paper, flowers and live plants and, of course, plenty of fresh fruit baskets.

The Seven Principles

By Andrew Lyke, Jr

As I ponder on who we are and what we are called to be,
The Nguzo Saba, Kwanzaa's Seven Principles, come to me.

The oneness in marriage and our family tree
Is the driving virtue, Umoja, our call to Unity.

Who do I say I am, in spite of the world's view?
To name myself as a creation of God's own hands,
And direct my life according to God's plan
Make Kujichagulia Principle Two.

Working together in the family and community,
Making the problems of others mine
Is Ujima's call for us to be
A World Community team for the Divine.

To open ourselves to the mystery of giving
By sharing our resources of time talent and treasure
Is Ujamaa's recipe for Christian living,
And a source of good feelings one cannot measure.

Serving the community to the extent
That it uplifts God's Name is our intent.
Living our lives as Jesus designed,
This is the purpose that Nia defines.

Using our talents to enhance our living,
Sensual creation, artistic giving,
Using our hands, ears, eyes and hearts,
Enjoyment through Kuumba, the creative arts.

To believe with all our hearts and strength within us
In the virtues of equality, justice and peace;
To trust that it's God's intent to put in us
The faith of Imani that will never cease.

These seven principles, the Nguzo Saba, we present
As a gift from our heritage without lament.
May this Kwanzaa celebration fill this hall
With the spirit of Christmas, and God's love for all.

May this celebration call you and me
To be the one community of faith we are meant to be.
Not a melting pot where we all are the same,
But one people of God with many different names.

Lift Every Voice and Sing

by James Weldon Johnson

Lift every voice and sing
'Til earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmony of liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies.
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith
That the dark past has taught us.
Sing a song full of the hope
That the present has brought us.
Facing the rising sun
Of our new day begun.
Let us march on 'til victory is won!

Stony the road we trod;
Bitter the chast'ning rod
felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place from which our fathers
sighed?
We have come over a way

That with tears have been watered.
We have come treading our path
Through the blood of the slaughtered.
Out from the gloomy past
'Til now we stand at last,
Where the white gleam of our bright star is
cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus
Far on the way,
Thou who hast by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places,
Our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine
Of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand
True to our God, true to our native land.

Biblical References to Kwanzaa (First Fruits)

(Exo 23:16) You shall observe the festival of harvest, of the first fruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.

(Exo 23:19) The choicest of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

(Exo 34:22) You shall observe the festival of weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the festival of ingathering at the turn of the year.

(Exo 34:26) The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

(Lev 2:14) If you bring a grain offering of first fruits to the LORD, you shall bring as the grain offering of your first fruits coarse new grain from fresh ears, parched with fire.

(Lev 23:17) You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering, each made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of choice flour, baked with leaven, as first fruits to the LORD.

(Lev 23:20) The priest shall raise them with the bread of the first fruits as an elevation offering before the LORD, together with the two lambs; they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.

(Num 13:20) and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be bold, and bring some of the fruit of the land." Now it was the season of the first ripe grapes.

(Num 18:13) The first fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to the LORD, shall be yours; everyone who is clean in your house may eat of it.

(Num 28:26) On the day of the first fruits, when you offer a grain offering of new grain to the LORD at your festival of weeks, you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations.

(2 Ki 4:42) A man came from Baal-Shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the



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people and let them eat.”

(Neh 10:35) We obligate ourselves to bring the first fruits of our soil and the first fruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the LORD;

(Neh 13:31) and I provided for the wood offering, at appointed times, and for the first fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

(Isa 28:4) And the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of those bloated with rich food, will be like a first-ripe fig before the summer; whoever sees it, eats it up as soon as it comes to hand.

(Ezek 44:30) The first of all the first fruits of all kinds, and every offering of all kinds from all your offerings, shall belong to the priests; you shall also give to the priests the first of your dough, in order that a blessing may rest on your house.

(Ezek 47:12) On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.

