

A Kwanzaa Prayer

We give thanks to God for all the blessings of the earth, and honor for the great goodness which is manifest in all of creation.

We ask that the spirit of Kwanzaa be infused into every aspect of our daily lives, that we may constantly remember the benefits and obligations of family, community and nationhood.

May the light of the seven candles illuminate our daily affairs and guide us into fulfillment of our true potential.

May we always remember our ancestors with reverence and love, and may they share with us their great wisdom and strength as we seek to preserve and continue the heritage they have left us.

May the NGUZU SABA become beacons to us to live lives in service, humility, unity, faith, love and strength.

Amen

(Resource: Excerpts taken from a Kwanzaa Service – Resource Watchnight Service held at Light of the World Christian Church. This Kwanzaa Service, led by youth, was written and directed by the Rev. Teresa Owens.)

Other Kwanzaa Celebration Resources can be found at: www.discipleshomemissions.org/



The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa was created to introduce and reinforce seven basic values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture among African American people as well as Africans throughout the world African community. These values are called the Nguzo Saba which in Swahili means the Seven Principles. Developed by Dr. Karenga, the Nguzo Saba stand at the heart of the origin and meaning of Kwanzaa, for it is these values which are not only the building blocks for community but also serve to reinforce and enhance them.

Many congregations and other organizations observe Kwanzaa following Christmas, during the Sunday morning worship service, Watch Night service or a special Kwanzaa program. However, more and more congregations, communities and families are beginning to celebrate the principles of Kwanzaa throughout the year with youth groups, children's ministries, Rites of Passage.

December 26 — Umoja (Unity): To strive for and to maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

December 27 — Kujichagulia (Self-Determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves stand up.

December 28 — Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems, and to solve them together.

December 29 — Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics): To build and maintain our own stores,

shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.

December 30 — Nia (Purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

December 31 — 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.

January 1 — Imani (Faith): To believe with all our hearts in God, our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Kwanzaa symbols include a decorative mat on which other symbols are placed, corn and other crops, a candle holder with seven candles, called a kinara, a communal cup for pouring libations, gifts, a poster of the seven principles, and a black, red, and green flag. The symbols were designed to convey the seven principles.[7]



The Kwanzaa Karumu is traditionally held on December 31st (participants celebrating New Year's Eve, should plan their Karamu early in the evening). It is a very special event as it is the one Kwanzaa event that brings us closer to our African roots. The Karamu is a communal and cooperative effort. Ceremonies and cultural expressions are highly encouraged. It is important to decorate the place where the Karamu will be held, (e.g., home, community center, church) in an African motif that utilizes black, red, and green color scheme. A large Kwanzaa setting should dominate the room where the karamu will take place. A large Mkeka should be placed in the center of the floor where the food should be placed creatively and made accessible to all for self-service. Prior to and during the feast, an informative and entertaining program should be presented. Traditionally, the program involved welcoming, remembering, reassessment, recommitment and rejoicing, concluded by a farewell statement and a call for greater unity.

Delicious African American delicacies are prepared during the Kwanzaa feast. Traditional African, Caribbean and South American recipes add the spice. Even though the celebration and feast continue throughout the festive times of Kwanzaa but on December 31, the celebration takes altogether a different mood for the special feast called Karamu. The dining tables of well adorned homes look impressive with various spicy and delicious delicacies. This is the day when revelers get the opportunity to satisfy their healthy appetites.

Below is a suggested format for the Karamu program, from a model by Dr. Karenga.

Kukaribisha (Welcoming)

Introductory Remarks and Recognition of Distinguished Guests and All Elders.
Cultural Expression (Songs, Music, Group Dancing, Poetry, Performances, Unity Circles)

Kuumba (Remembering)

Reflections of a Man, Woman and Child.
Cultural Expression

Kuchunguza Tena Na Kutoa Ahadi Tena (Reassessment and Recommitment)

Introduction of Distinguished Guest Lecturer and Short Talk.

Kushangilla (Rejoicing)

Tamshi la Tambiko (Libation Statement)

It is tradition to pour libation in remembrance of the ancestors on all special occasions. Kwanzaa, is such an occasion, as it provides us an opportunity to reflect on our African past and American present. Water is suggested as it holds the essence of life and should be placed in a communal cup and poured in the direction of the four winds; north, south, east, and west. It should then be passed among family members and guests who may either sip from the cup or make a sipping gesture. LIBATION STATEMENT.

For the ancestors and their indomitable spirit
For the elders from whom we can learn much.
For our youth who represent the promise for tomorrow.
For our people the original people.
For our struggle and in remembrance of those who have struggled on our behalf.
For Umoja the principle of unity which should guide us in all that we do.
For the creator who provides all things great and small.

Celebration

- Lauren Gorine (fiestentak)
- Kukaribisha (Welcoming)
- Kuumba (Remembering)
- Kuchunguza Tena Na Kutoa Ahadi Tena (Reassessment and Recommitment)
- Kushangilla (Rejoicing)
- Tamshi la Tambiko (Libation Statement)
- Tamshi la Tutaonana (The Farewell Statement)

Read more at <http://www.theholidayspot.com/kwanzaa/karamu.htm#rT2Eee7dEcFskEJP.99>

