

## **8. Christmas Day**

Christmas is an annual Christian holiday observed on December 25<sup>th</sup>. It celebrates the birth of Jesus of Nazareth and marks the start of the larger season known as Christmastide, which lasts twelve days. Jesus's nativity is the basis for the anno Domini (A.D.) system of dating. It isn't known for certain if December 25<sup>th</sup> is the actual date of Jesus's birth, but it may have been selected to correspond with a Roman festival or the winter solstice. Regardless, it is a holiday that has been celebrated worldwide for centuries and numerous traditions have been developed in its honor.

## **9. Kwanzaa**

Kwanzaa is a week-long holiday that is observed from December 26<sup>th</sup> to January 1<sup>st</sup> each year. It is celebrated primarily by African-Americans in the United States and by people of African descent throughout the world. The name Kwanzaa comes from the Swahili phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits." The Kwanzaa celebration has seven days of activities, including candle lighting ceremonies, gift giving, and feasting. Homes are decorated with colorful African art and cloth and fresh fruits. There is music and storytelling that reflect African history and respect for ancestors. Libations are generally shared by all participants, including children, and passed around in a common chalice known as the "Kikombe cha Umoja." The daily greeting for the Kwanzaa holiday is "Habari Gani" which means "What's the news?" in Swahili.

## **10. National Candy Cane Day**

National Candy Cane Day is December 26<sup>th</sup> each year. This is another "National" holiday for which there is no Congressional record or Presidential proclamation. It is just widely accepted as a fun day to enjoy learning about and eating candy canes. The candy cane is traditionally white with red stripes and flavored with peppermint, but it can be found in a variety of other colors and flavors, as well. The candy cane started as a straight, hard, all-white stick invented by French priests in the early 1400s. Legend has it that in 1670, a choirmaster at Cologne Cathedral in Germany curved the peppermint sugar sticks into cane shapes to represent the shepherd staff of Jesus and gave them to children at church services. Candy canes are a tradition that can be found in greatest abundance during the Christmas holidays in North America, but limited quantities are also available the rest of the year.