



Pastor's Pen

Christmas



When was the first Christmas? Why do we give gifts to each other? Where did Santa Claus come from and how does he fit into the holiday? Instituting the ordinance of the Lord's Table, Jesus commanded that we celebrate His death and resurrection. But, are we ever directed to celebrate His birth? The answer, of course, is no. So why is Christmas such a big deal, and so steeped in tradition? Researching the answers to these questions I learned some very interesting facts. I want to share with you a little of the history of Christmas and how Santa came to be.

Since Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus within the Christian community, it stands to reason for them that the first Christmas was when Jesus Christ was born. Thus, the celebration is focused on that single, historical and supernatural event. The first mention of Christmas occurred in 336 A.D. in an early Roman calendar, which indicates December 25 as the day of observance and celebration. The celebration was probably influenced by pagan (non-religious) festivals held at the time. As part of the year-end celebrations of their harvest god, Saturn, and their god of lights, Mithras, people prepared special foods, decorated their homes with greenery, joined in singing and gave gifts. These customs gradually became part of the Christmas celebration.

In the late 300's Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. By 1100, Christmas had become the most important religious celebration in Europe. During the 1400's and 1500's many artists painted scenes of the "Nativity", the birth of Jesus.



During the Reformation of the 1500's many Christians began to consider Christmas a pagan celebration because it included non-religious customs. As a result of these feelings, during the 1600's Christmas was outlawed in England and parts of the English Colonies in America. In spite of this, people continued to exchange Christmas gifts, and soon started to follow the old customs again. In the 1800's sending cards and decorating trees became popular. Also, many of the carols we sing today were composed during this era. By the mid 1800's Santa Claus replaced St. Nicholas as the symbol of gift giving.

Today, Christmas is widely recognized as a Christian holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ.

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Pastor's Pen Continued

Santa Claus

The current ideas of Santa Claus had its roots in the early Catholic Church, growing out of the tradition of Nicholas, Bishop of Myra (an ancient city along the Mediterranean coast of what is now Turkey). Two things he did that were considered miracles by many elevated him to sainthood. One, he seized grain off a ship bound for Byzantium to feed the starving city. The loss was never missed by the ship owners. Second, he supplied dowries for three young women by placing gold in their stockings that were hung up to dry.

Six hundred years after he died, St. Nicholas' bones were stolen and brought to Bari, Italy where stories about his gifts to children grew and the celebration of his birthday in December continued. German stories about Kristkringle and Dutch stories about Sinterklass grew out of the early legends of St. Nicholas. Eventually they emerged into a figure that brought gifts to children each December.

The Germans, Dutch and others brought their Nicholas traditions to the New World. Those traditions were developed by creative American minds into the modern stories of Santa Claus. One of the key developments was a poem written in 1822 by Union Seminary Professor, Clement Clarke Moore, entitled, "A Visit from St. Nicholas". It begins with this now famous line, "Twas the Night before Christmas".

Regardless of your traditions concerning Santa Claus, remember, he is a myth. Jesus is real. The celebration of this season is God coming to earth, robed in human flesh, a babe in the manger, the Savior of the world!

I pray your Christmas will be blessed and filled with joy.

In Christian Love,
Pastor Jim



Sources:

World Book Encyclopedia; Evolution of St. Nick, W. M. Zoba; Christianity Today, Dec. 4, 2000

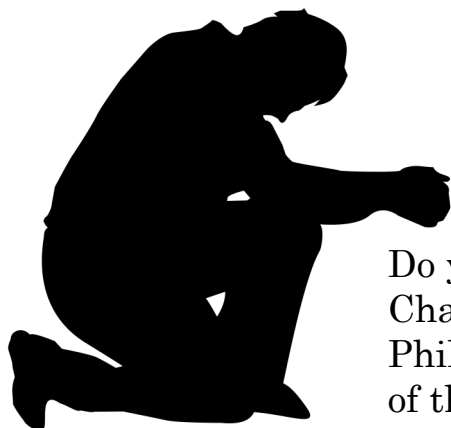
Operation Christmas Child

Thank you to everyone who helped, donated and gave! We shipped 75 boxes which was our goal and had enough money to cover the shipping costs! We will let you know where our shoeboxes went after we are told (usually in January.) Be on the lookout next month as we start to collect items for next year's boxes.



Today's Word—Thursday November 17

“Pray...that...words may be given me.” Eph 6:19 NIV



PRAY FOR YOUR PASTOR

Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus: “Pray... that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me...that I will fearlessly make known...the gospel.”

Do you pray for your pastor? You should! After Wilbur Chapman’s first sermon at Bethany Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, a man said, “You’re pretty young to be pastor of this great church. We’ve always had older men. I’m afraid you won’t succeed, but since you preach the gospel I’m going to help you all I can.” Chapman thought, “What a crank.” But the man continued, “I’m going to pray for you, and a few others have covenanted to join me.” Later, Chapman wrote, “I didn’t feel so bad when I learned that they were going to pray for me. Soon the three became fifty, and the fifty became two hundred who met before every service to pray for me. In another room eighteen elders knelt so closely around me that I could put out my hand and touch them. I always went into my pulpit confident that I would have God’s anointing in answer to the prayers of those people. It was easy to preach, a real joy. And what was the result? Eleven hundred people were saved and joined the church in the next three years, and six hundred of them were men. It was the fruit of the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. Church members have much more to do than go to church as curious, idle spectators to be amused and entertained. It is their business to pray mightily that the Holy Spirit will clothe the preacher with power and make his words like dynamite.”

Article submitted by: Margaret Berry

Usher and Greeter News

Greeters and Ushers are key positions in our church as they are usually the first people that our members and guests see when they enter. First impressions are important and we endeavor to provide a friendly welcoming experience for all who come through our doors.

We would like to have more names on our rotation, if you are interested please see Head Usher Pete Berry. Since this is a key position there is a requirement that you be a church member.

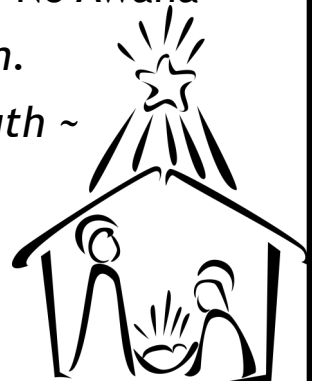
Thank you, Pete Berry.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES AT FSBC



December Calendar

- Dec 4 Lottie Moon Dinner (5:30 p.m.)
- Dec 4–11 Lottie Moon Week of Prayer
- Dec 5 Finance Committee Meeting (7:00 p.m.)
- Dec 6 Ladies' Leadership Team Meeting (6:30 p.m.)
- Dec 8 Nominating Committee Meeting (7:00 p.m.)
- Dec 9 Kid's Night Out (6:00 p.m.)
- Dec 11 Deacons' Meeting (6:30 p.m.)
- Dec 13 PR Meeting (6:30 p.m.)
- Dec 15 Ladies' Christmas Party & Cookie Exchange (6:30 p.m.)
- Dec 16 Youth Christmas Party (6:00 p.m.)
- Dec 18 Christmas Cantata (11:00 a.m.)
Business Meeting (5:30 p.m.)
- Dec 21 MDO Christmas Program (11:30 a.m.)
- Dec 22 No MDO
- Dec 23–Jan 8 Christmas Break ~ No School, No MDO, No Awana
- Dec 25 *Christmas Day ~ Special Service Time: 10:30 a.m.
No Sunday School, Evening Service or Awana Youth ~*
- Dec 26 *Offices Closed ~ Christmas Observed ~*
- Dec 27 Sunday School Training (6:30 p.m.)
- Jan 1 *New Year's Day ~ No Evening Service, No Awana Youth ~*
- Jan 2 *Offices Closed ~ New Year's Day Observed ~*



Christmas Activities

Ladies Christmas Party

Thursday, December 15th at 6:30 p.m. at Rose Plympton's house: 1060 N 14th East. Please bring a wrapped ornament (\$5 limit) for our gift exchange. There is also an opportunity to do a cookie exchange. If you are interested bring in 4 dozen of the same cookie and we will divvy them up. Bring a yummy treat to share as well.



Youth Christmas Party!

The Youth Christmas party will be Friday, December 16th at 6 p.m. Meet at the church for a time of food and fun to celebrate our Savior's birth.

Cantata Performance

11:00 a.m. Sunday, December 18th during the morning service.

MDO Christmas Program

Wednesday, December 21st at 11:30 a.m.

Christmas Break

December 22nd—January 6th.

No MDO, No Awana



Christmas Day

Special Christmas Service: 10:30—11:30 a.m.

No Sunday School, Evening Service or Awana Youth

Monday, December 26th

Christmas Observed ~ Offices Closed ~



New Year's Day

Sunday School and Morning Service at regular times.

No Evening Service or Awana Youth

Monday, January 2nd

New Year's Day Observed ~ Offices Closed ~



Food Court

Fantasy Fudge by Carnation

3/4 c. (1 1/2 sticks) of butter

3 c. sugar

1 can (5 oz. or 2/3 c.) evaporated milk

1 bag (12 oz. or 2 c.) semi-sweet chocolate chips

1 tsp. vanilla

1 jar (7 oz.)marshmallow creme



Melt the stick of butter over low heat, add sugar and evaporated milk. Bring to a heavy boil. Boil 5 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in chocolate chips until completely melted. Add vanilla and marshmallow creme. Pour into a 9X13 pan. Cool, cut and serve.

For a twist try flavored chocolate chips or add a different flavoring.

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

Lottie Moon was a missionary to China from 1873-1912. The offering for international missions is named for her because throughout her career, Lottie Moon wrote numerous letters home, urging Southern Baptists to greater mission involvement and support. One of those letters triggered Southern Baptists' first Christmas offering for international missions—enough to send three new missionaries to China. Today the offering is used to send and support missionaries all over the world. All the money collected goes directly to support missionaries. Our church goal is \$3,000 this year. Won't you prayerfully consider helping support this worthy cause?



Goal:\$3000

Received to date: \$396

Comedy Corner

Jacob was a cheater, Peter had a temper, David had an affair, Noah got drunk, Jonah ran from God, Paul was a murderer, Gideon was insecure, Miriam was a gossip, Martha was a worrier, Mary M. was a prostitute, Thomas was a doubter, Sarah was impatient, Elijah was moody, Moses stuttered, Zaccheus was short, Abraham was old, and Lazarus was dead....Now, what's YOUR excuse? Can God use you or not? ~~~ God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the CALLED!

The Turkey Wishbone :

My grandfather always had the knack of saying the right thing. One Thanksgiving we explained to my younger brother the custom of breaking the turkey wishbone. Eager to have his wish come true, little Philip was bitterly disappointed when he saw that he held the small end of the bone, while his grandfather had the larger part.

"That's all right, my boy," said his smiling grandfather. "My wish was that you would get yours." - Contributed by Linda Ann Loschiavo

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

3	Jimmy Phillips	25	Jacob Lawrence
4	Peggy Hitt		Nicole Stallsworth
	John McDougal	27	Patti Clark
5	Raymond Danner		Chris Pentico
6	Don Hancock		Dee & Tami Imlay
16	Victoria Weiger		Doug & Susan Croyle
18	Carolyn Miller	28	Jordan Weiger
21	Allison Clark	29	Diane Noland
22	Bob & Birgitta Lankford	30	Dakota Carley
24	Dale Kearby		Ryan Krebs
			LeRoy Damke



*If you do not see your name here and would like to:
please contact the church office at 587-3828 and let us know your birthday and/or anniversary.*