

December 2019

“Yucca Breeze



T H E U N I T E D C H U R C H E S O F
H O T S P R I N G S

Dear Friends and Family,

Christmas Around the World—2019

Ever wonder about Christmas, its name and how other countries besides ours celebrate the Savior’s birth? Let’s start by considering the Etymology...at least according to Wiki: "Christmas" is a shortened form of "Christ's mass". The word is recorded as *Crīstesmæsse* in 1038 and *Cristes-messe* in 1131. *Crīst* (genitive *Crīstes*) is from Greek *Khrīstos* (Χριστός), a translation of Hebrew *Māšîaḥ* (" , (מָשִׁיחַ) Messiah , "meaning "anointed", and *mæsse* is from Latin *missa*, the celebration of the Eucharist.

The form *Christenmas* was also historically used, but is now considered archaic and dialectal; it derives from Middle English *Cristenmasse*, literally "Christian mass". *Xmas* is an abbreviation of *Christmas* found particularly in print, based on the initial letter chi (X) in Greek *Khrīstos* (Χριστός), "Christ", though numerous style guides discourage its use; it has precedent in Middle English *Xpēs masse* (where "Xp" is an abbreviation for Χριστός). Now, what about some other countries. Does everyone have a Christmas tree? Nativity scenes? Santa Clause? You may be surprised:

Giant Lantern Festival, Philippines

The Giant Lantern Festival (Ligligan Parul Sampernandu) is held each year on the Saturday before Christmas Eve in the city of San Fernando – the “Christmas Capital of the Philippines.” The festival attracts spectators from all over the country and across the globe. Eleven barangays (villages) take part in the festival and competition is fierce as everyone pitches in trying to build the most elaborate

lantern. Originally, the lanterns were simple creations around half a metre in diameter, made from ‘papel de hapon’ (Japanese origami paper) and lit by candle. Today, the lanterns are made from a

variety of materials and have grown to around six metres in size. They are illuminated by electric bulbs that sparkle in a kaleidoscope of patterns.

Krampus, Austria

A beast-like demon creature that roams city streets frightening kids and punishing the bad ones – nope, this isn’t Halloween, but St. Nicholas’ evil accomplice, Krampus. In Austrian tradition, St. Nicholas rewards nice little boys and girls, while Krampus is said to capture the naughtiest children and whisk them away in his sack. In the first week of December, young men dress up as the Krampus (especially on the eve of St. Nicholas Day) frightening children with clattering chains and bells.

Kentucky Fried Christmas Dinner, Japan

Christmas has never been a big deal in Japan. Aside from a few small, secular traditions such as gift-giving and light displays, Christmas remains largely a novelty in the coun-

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The Yule Lads, Iceland

In the 13 days leading up to Christmas, 13 tricky troll-like characters come out to play in Iceland. The Yule Lads (jólasveinarnir or jólasveinar in Icelandic) visit the children across the country over the 13 nights leading up to Christmas. For each night of Yuletide, children place their best shoes by the window and a different Yule Lad visits leaving gifts for nice girls and boys and rotting potatoes for the naughty ones. Clad in traditional Icelandic costume, these fellas are pretty mischievous, and their names hint at the type of trouble they like to cause: Stekkjastaur (Sheep-Cote Clod), Giljagaur (Gully Gawk), Stúfur (Stubby), Þvörusleikir (Spoon-Licker), Pottaskefill (Pot-Scraper), Askasleikir (Bowl-Licker), Hurðaskellir (Door-Slammer), Skyrgámur (Skyr-Gobbler), Bjúgnakrækir (Sausage-Swiper), Gluggagægir (Window-Peeper), Gáttapefur (Doorway-Sniffer), Ketkrókur (Meat-Hook) and Kertasníkir (Candle-Stealer). Visit Iceland this Christmas and catch them all!

Saint Nicholas' Day, Germany

Not to be confused with Weihnachtsmann (Father Christmas), Nikolaus travels by donkey in the middle of the night on December 6 (Nikolaus Tag) and leaves little treats like coins, chocolate, oranges and toys in the shoes of good children all over Germany, and particularly in the Bavarian region. St. Nicholas also visits children in schools or at home and in exchange for sweets or a small present each child must recite a poem, sing a song or draw a picture. In short, he's a great guy. But it isn't always fun and games. St. Nick often brings along Knecht Ruprecht (Farmhand Rupert). A devil-like character dressed in dark clothes covered with bells and a dirty beard, Knecht Ruprecht carries a stick or a small whip in hand to punish any children who misbehave.

Norway

Never leave a good broom behind in Norway over Christmas: it might get stolen. Perhaps one of the most unorthodox Christmas Eve traditions can be found in Norway, where people hide their brooms. It's a tradition that dates back centuries to when people believed that witches and evil spirits came out on Christmas Eve looking for brooms to ride on. To this day, many people still hide their brooms in the safest place in the house to stop them from being stolen.

Venezuela

Enjoy a Christmas dinner consisting of 'tamales' in Venezuela Love Christmas, but think it could be improved by a spot of roller-blading? If the answer is yes, visit Caracas, Venezuela this year. Every Christmas Eve, the city's residents head to church in the early morning – so far, so normal – but, for reasons known only to them, they do so on roller skates. This unique tradition is so popular that roads across the city are closed to cars so that people can skate to church in safety, before heading home for the less-than-traditional Christmas dinner of 'tamales' (a wrap made out of cornmeal dough and stuffed with meat, then steamed).

I was fascinated by all the different ways that people consider celebrating Christmas. And yet, it's pathetically sad as well. What has happened to the real meaning of the event in most if not all of the countries above? Where exactly is Christ. More, have we as the United States led the way in supplanting the real message for a more marketable one, one that carries more of a placid and politically palatability? But here's a good thought. At least Christmas IS being observed and celebrated. Sure, some may not consider the real meaning, but cannot our Lord still work wonders in spite and despite of people's conceptions and/or intentions. Absolutely! And let us then be ever thankful and always grateful, that for us in the United States we still do have the real meaning of Christmas, at least at the heart of the season. From Bernice and I to you and yours, Merry Christmas?

Merry Christmas and Blessings to a All

Pastor David

DECEMBER Birthdays:

8 Gordon Brooks
10 Nancy Cuckler
Bill Waxler
13 Pat Collogan
15 John Johnson
16 Lynn Buchholz
17 Jean Meadows
18 Mike Buchholz
20 Mark Posthumus
24 Don DeVries
26 Claude Bent



DECEMBER Anniversaries:

19 Jerry/Jeanne Wyatt
28 Wayne & Sally Hageman



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If your name is not included on the Birthdays and Anniversaries list and you would like it to be added, please contact the church office by email: uc@gwtc.net or call 745-5640.

Thank You Note From Basic Needs Boutique

We would like to extend a heartfelt Thank You for all your generous donations of basic needs items and monetary donations given for the Basic Needs Boutique. Your support will enable us to provide an important ministry in our community.

In His Name
The Volunteers of the BNB
And The United Churches Mission Team

Update from Memorial Committee

The Memorials Committee has met and approved changing the time of year the Christmas Memorial Ornaments will be presented. It was the consensus that Christmas might be too much of an emotional time to do this presentation. We will not be presenting the Memorial Ornaments in May of each year, close to Memorial Day.

January Sunday Ministry

The United Churches is signed up to cover Sunday Ministry at Seven Sisters Nursing Home for the month of January (every Sunday except the first Sunday of the month). The service is at 2:00 p.m. We will have communion, and Carol Posthumus will provide music.

Update on Arika

Annie and Arika have returned from Arika's surgery in Minneapolis and Arika still has some paralysis and will be starting physical therapy for that. Please pray for healing of this complication from her last surgery.

Shoebox Joy

Shoebox campaign was **VERY SUCCESSFUL** this year!! We filled 48 shoeboxes. Thanks to everyone who participated.

Blessings,
Jan



The **100th Anniversary Booklet** committee has received a few church memories for possible use in the booklet. We are looking for a few more as we start to lay out the booklet. Please leave them at the church office or with Carol Nelson or Gerald Collogan. Thank you!

The United Churches
342 N. Garden St.
Hot Springs, SD 57747
605-745-5640
Email: uc@gwtc.net
www.unitedchurcheshotsprings.org

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