

Greetings Saints of Emmanuel:

Christmas is coming.

Our remembrance and celebration of the incarnation of the Son of God is *almost* at hand. But not yet!

So until then, join us for today's Advent service, Friday's caroling service, and Sunday's final advent service (where we'll have four baptisms!).

See you in worship.

In Christ our Lord,
+ Pastor Justin Baker

Today, Wednesday, December 17th

10:00 AM Discipleship Committee Meeting

11:00 AM Council Meeting

6:00 PM Light Meal

Menu: Roast, Potato Soup, Salad, Bread & Butter, Desserts

7:00 PM Advent Midweek Service

Following refreshments, we will meet in the sanctuary to pray a Compline service. We will do this every Wednesday in Advent.

See the bulletin for tonight's service [here](#).

Newsworthy

Poinsettia Orders

The deadline to order poinsettias has passed, but if you missed it, we ordered a few extras. Please reach out to the office as soon as possible to let us know if you would like to purchase one of these extras (this count is final, so once they're gone there will be no more opportunities).

Brookdale Caroling Service Friday, Dec. 19th, 11:15AM Delivering Christmas Gifts & Stockings!

Thank you to everyone who has given Christmas gifts for Brookdale residents. If you haven't brought them, please bring them to the office today! Please join us for the caroling worship service this Friday!

New Members Class | Beginning February

For all those who are ready to become members of Emmanuel, there will be a new member's class beginning in February. If you would like to signup, please let Pastor or the Office know.

Worship Volunteers

Volunteer scheduling will now be coordinated by the church office. An email has gone out to all volunteers with the schedule for January: if you did not receive it please let us know!

United Together, We Pray

Prayers for Mission Workers

For the Omars and their ministry among Muslims in the Atlanta region; for the Thorstads in their work in Laos & Thailand; and for Dure Negassa and the Rev. Gemachu in their ministry in Kenya among the Oromos.

Prayers for those in need of Intercession:

George and Donna Campagna, Linda Casper, Suzanne & Ernesto Carns & family, May Hill, Jim Troxell, David Weihe, Vince Berardinelli, Gayle Wertz, June Ugen, Brylee, Addison, Sandra, Zachary, Kevin, David, Kathy, Asa, Jerry, Jack, Al & family, Beth, Colleen, Rachael, Leila, Darin, Les & Cathy, Tony, Sarah, and Harry

Prayers of Bereavement

Most Blessed and Holy God, we implore you to remember *the family of Debbie Pritts, the family of Mark, the family of Cathy, the family of Rosalie, and the family of Tom*. Fill all families who mourn with the strength to grieve, the comfort of your presence, and faith unto life everlasting.

Prayer for this Church

We pray that you will fill this congregation with the faith that endures unto life eternal. We pray that you make us one people united in prayer. We pray that you will send families, children, widows & widowers, the elderly, and any others into our midst, that they may also be filled with faith, encourage this congregation, and bring honor and glory and praise to your name.

Worship

Today, Wednesday, the 17th: Light Meal, 6PM | Advent Service, 7PM

This evening, we will have refreshments and a worship service, as is our custom during Advent.

From Sunday's Sermon

"Paul gives us the blueprint for our metric of success: to steward the mystery of faith — the good news — faithfully. That means that I must keep the faith, that I must proclaim the good news in season and out of season, and that I must encourage those entrusted to this congregation to remain in the faith. But the whole body of Christ is needed. Faith cannot be done alone. The Lord needs more than pastors — he needs the whole people of God to join together as his body to carry out his mission in this world."

Watch this past Sunday's sermon [here](#) or read it [here](#).

And if you missed last week's Wednesday service, watch the homily [here](#) or read it [here](#).

Is the origin of Christmas pagan?

If you have questions about the origins of some of our Christmas traditions, see [this article](#) to learn more about where the Christmas traditions we use came from, and why they are *not* linked to paganism, as you might have heard. See below for some useful graphics that offer a deep dive into the origin of the main elements of Christmas, from the date itself all the way down to mistletoe!

SO WHERE DOES DEC. 25 COME FROM IF IT'S NOT PAGAN?

The date of Christmas was never an appropriation or supplanting of pagan festivals. All of the evidence points to the fact that early Christians genuinely believed that Jesus' birth took place on Dec. 25th and celebrated it as such.



Hippolytus of Rome

Hippolytus of Rome, wrote a commentary on the book of Daniel in the early third century. In it he states that Jesus was born "eight days before the Calends of January," which would have been December 24th or 25th.

AD 170 – 235

Hippolytus of Rome, Commentary on Daniel 4.33.5.



Tertullian

& The Death / Birth Concept

There was an idea within early Christianity that if you were really holy you would die on the day you were conceived or born. This was calculated mainly because the Old Testament would record the life of individuals

AD 160 - 240

like Moses and present round numbers (without adding months or days). The most holy man who ever lived was Jesus, therefore many within the early church thought he *must* have died on his birthday. The ancient Christian writer Tertullian, in *Adversus Iudaeos*, stated that Christ suffered "in the month of March, at the time of the Passover, on the eighth day before the Calends of April." That day would have been March 25th. If that was also the day of the Incarnation, it explains why the early Church set the date for Christmas nine months later on December 25th.

Tertullian, Adversus Iudaeos, Ch. VIII.



Sextus Julius Africanus

The origin of December 25th as the date for Christmas finds its beginnings in the late second and early third century with the historian Sextus Julius Africanus. Africanus, wrote a volume titled *Chronographiai*, an early Christian treatise that attempted to chronologically cover world history from creation up until his own day. Based on calculations from his reading of Luke and Matthew's Gospels, Africanus concluded that Jesus was

conceived on March 25th. For the birth then, he counted nine months ahead which landed him on the date of December 25th.

Sextus Julius Africanus, Chronographiai Volume 1.



Augustine

Wesley Huff
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Augustine in the fourth century attests to the ongoing tradition of Jesus' birth being on Dec. 25th. He wrote, "For he [Jesus] is believed to have been conceived on the 25th of March, upon which day also he suffered; so the womb of the Virgin, in which he was conceived, where no one of mortals was begotten, corresponds to the new grave in which he was buried, wherein was never man laid, neither before him nor since."

Augustine of Hippo, On the Trinity, from McGowan, "December 25th."

CHRISTMAS IS NOT A PAGAN HOLIDAY

Celebrating the incarnation of Jesus at Christmas is a longstanding Christian tradition spanning over a millennia. Although there has clearly been growth, lore, and traditions added to our modern practice of the holiday the accusation of substantial pagan roots falls apart under historical inspection. All the traditional "pagan" associations and connections with Christmas, when truly put under the microscope, turn out to be themselves more fiction than fact.

→ A good portion of this material owes its credit to the work of Michael Jones of [Inspiring Philosophy](#). To find out more visit [inspiringphilosophy.org](#)

DEC. 25th

claim



The date of Christmas is borrowed from pagan festivals like Sol Invictus and / or Saturnalia

Winter Solstice

Sol Invictus

reality

Sol Invictus was not placed on 12/25 until 354 AD when the Philocalian Calendar records this but doesn't specify any festival with regards to sun worship. Prior to this, the Julio-Claudian fasti inscriptions say Sun festivals were on August 8th, 9th, 28th, and December 11th, and maybe October 19th. The Philocalian Calendar says Emperor Aurelian honored the sun with chariot races every 4 years Oct 19-22.

Saturnalia

Saturnalia was never on 12/25. Macrobius says *Saturnalia* began 14 days before January, which comes out to December 17th, using Roman Calendrical dates. He says it lasted for 3 days, but according to the Fasti inscriptions, it lasted to the 24th during the days of the Republic.

The *Winter Solstice* had no festive significance to ancient Romans. There were no celebrations planned for the date and they disagreed on when it was. The Julian Calendar does say 12/25, but Pliny the Elder says 12/26, and Columella says 12/23.

"Father Christmas"

Father Christmas, surprisingly, pre-dates Santa Claus. But he is not a pagan deity. Instead, he was a medieval personification of Christmas. Richard Smart of Plymtree is the first to write about him, referring to him as Sir Christmas, and his task is to announce the birth of Christ

Oxford Book of Carols, no. 31, 41-3

SANTA



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"Santa"

Santa Claus can only be traced back to Dutch immigrants in New York in the early 1800s. He came from the Dutch *Sinterklaas*, also known as St. Nicolas. His feast day was on 12/6 and was moved to 12/25 around this time to help make Christmas a family holiday. Newspapers promoted it and encouraged to give gifts on Christmas instead of New Years' like it traditionally was before this. *Sinterklaas* was rebranded from a catholic priest to look like a traditional dutchman from that time period, which included a big red suit. After this Santa was exported around the world and different countries added new spins. Stockings were also promoted around this time period and trace back to Clement C. Moor's "A Visit from St. Nicholas." In 1927, in Finland, a radio broadcaster, Markus Rautio, morphed the old pagan deity, Joulupukki, into a Santa figure. Santa changed the Joulupukki figure, not the other way around.

A Dictionary of English Folklore, section: Santa

CHRISTMAS TREES

claim

Christmas trees find their origin in druid and pagan practices of bringing pine trees into one's house to ward off nature spirits.



reality

Christmas trees only go back to the 16th century in Europe. The first mention of Christmas trees is in an Alsace ordinance in the 16th century. Almost no early pagans thought pine trees were sacred, let alone associated with 12/25. Germanic tribes believed the oak was sacred. Maximus of Tyre said, "The Celts indeed worship Zeus, but they honour Him in the form of a lofty oak."



MISTLETOE

Mistletoe does not go back to paganism. The first we hear of using mistletoe as Christmas decorations are in Robert Herrick, "Hesperides poetry collection," (1633, 1634), and then William Coles mentions it is a decoration in "The Art of Simpling" (1600s). The tradition of kissing under it did not begin until the end of the 18th century in Britain.

"A Dictionary of English Folklore," section: Mistletoe

Discipleship

Sunday School, 9AM

Sunday School Class

We'll finish *Live Not By Lies* this Sunday!

Fellowship Hour, Dec. 28th, 9AM

We'll watch a Christmas Movie during Sunday School and decorate a Christmas Cookie Nativity Set. (Free cookies!)

Bible Study on the Book of Daniel I

On Pause Until January 26th

From Daniel

God always fulfills his promises, and always uses his people — whether in their faithfulness or unfaithfulness — to be a light to the nations. Here, Judah's very rejection of God is what sets the stage for Babylon to receive God. And then, Babylon's subsequent rejection of God is what sets the stage for Judah to return to faithfulness to God.

[View the Key for Chapter One Here](#)

[View Last Week's Lesson Here](#)

Fellowship & Evangelism

GriefShare

This is a video based, facilitator led program. Read more information and see an introductory video [here](#). We'll plan to meet with potential facilitators soon, and begin making a plan to roll this out from there.

Stewardship

Let us know if you need any help around your home. A few members of the church would like to help!

More This Week

December 17th

10AM: Discipleship Committee Meeting

11:30AM: Council Meeting

6PM: Midweek Refreshments

7PM: Advent Worship Service

December 18th

7PM: Girl Scouts

December 19th

11:15AM: Brookdale Worship Service (and present delivery!)

5:30PM: Girl Scouts

6:00PM: Girl Scouts

December 21th

9AM: Live Not By Lies

10:15AM: Worship on the Fourth Sunday of Advent

After Worship: Decorate the church

December 22nd

2PM: Quilting with the ELCW

6:30PM: Start the Week

December 23rd

9AM: Bell Choir

10AM: Bell Choir Subset

December 24th

7PM: Christmas Eve Worship Service

Upcoming Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays:

12/17 Donna Berardinelli

12/28 Angela Held

12/29 James Troxell

12/30 Carol McDowell

12/31 George Campagna

Anniversaries:

There are currently no recorded anniversaries in December. Please contact the office if we've missed one!

Photo Gallery on Our Website!

We've added a photo gallery to our website to make pictures easier to access and view (and to make the newsletter clearer). Contact the office to add pictures of events to the gallery! (We will feature fewer photos in the newsletters so that we can include more on the website.) View the website photos [here](#).



[Download the Bulletin](#)



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