

VISITOR

December 2, 2022



Casey First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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Pastor Evan Sherar, 812-698-7504, pastor.evansherar@gmail.com

Pastor Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday & Friday 9:00 am-Noon

Secretary Office Hours: Wednesday 8:00 am - Noon

Sunday Services: 9:00 am Sunday School, 10:00 am Worship

To Know God-To Love God-To Serve God

Merry Christmas!

Year after year, we celebrate at this time with family and friends. We share presents and delicious food, candy canes and stockings filled with goodies. And year after year, you probably hear all kinds of things circulating about "Well, Jesus wasn't actually born on Christmas" - or maybe you've heard it was originally a pagan festival that Christians adopted when Roman Emperor Constatine converted to Christianity. Over my lifetime, I've heard all kinds of claims about the "real" day when Jesus was supposedly born, about whether we should or shouldn't celebrate Christmas because it's supposedly a pagan holiday. I'm sure you all have heard a number of claims too.

Allow me, then, to share what I know. Maybe it will set the record straight. More importantly, though, I hope this knowledge that I share with you will expand your curiosity and lead you to deeper and deeper knowledge of God.

We all know that Christmas is December 25th. For years and years, this has been the case, but not always. When did the first Christians celebrate Christmas then if not on December 25? Well, the consensus seems to be that the very first Christians didn't commemorate the birth of Christ at all. The earliest teachings and spiritual practice for Christians centered around the Lord's Table, or Communion. They probably celebrated Easter as early as the first decade or two after Christ's death and resurrection, but they didn't celebrate his birth until much later. The earliest documentation we have of Christians commemorating Jesus's birth comes in the 200's CE, and that celebration took place on January 6th.

The ancient celebration of Christ's birth on January 6th was based on a couple things. First, it was commonly believed that martyrs and prophets, because they were holy people, lived whole and complete lives. And one of the ways they celebrated this was to say that they must have died on the same way they were conceived. That way, their life was a perfect number of years -

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it wasn't 79 years and 249 days, but 80 years exactly. Or however many years they lived. They didn't always keep track of birthdays very well, so if they didn't know what day someone was born they would calculate it as 9 months from the day they died (since the day they died was supposed to be the day they were born). Second, ancient Christians believed Jesus was crucified on April 6th. This lines up with the moon and the spring equinox similar to how we commemorate Easter today. So, nine months after April 6th... January 6th. That was the earliest known day for commemorating Christ's birth.

Now, I can already hear your confusion. *But Pastor, January 6th is Epiphany! What about Epiphany?* Here, we have to acknowledge a couple of things. We have to acknowledge that there was already a pagan festival at the end of December and that Christians moved the date of Christmas to align with this already-existing pagan festival. This is a well-documented, historical fact. I don't think this fact makes celebrating Christmas on December 25th any less special. Another truth we have to acknowledge is, well, we simply do not know what day Jesus was actually born. Nobody wrote it down, and if they did we don't have that document anywhere.

When Constantine became a Christian in the fourth century, Christianity grew in popularity. One of the things that happened was that Christians started to take over the normal Roman holy days. Eventually, as Christianity eventually became the established religion of the Roman Empire, the Christian celebrations took over for the pagan ones altogether. And most notably, this is what happened with Christmas.

There was already a long-established holiday on the winter solstice - December 21st and December 22nd. There was a lot of variability in this winter solstice holiday across an array of cultures, from Egypt to Syria to Rome and even the Celts in what is today England and Ireland. But one thing that was consistent was that the celebration had to do with the dying and rebirth of the sun. As days grew shorter, it was believed that the sun was getting weaker and dying. Then, after the solstice when days started getting longer again, it was because on the solstice the sun was reborn and becoming strong again. At least, that is the basic gist of it. The solstice, then, was the day of the sun's birth. Augustine, a fourth-century pastor and teacher, was known to tell people not to celebrate the birth of the sun but the birth of the sun's Creator - Jesus. This shows that around the fourth century is when Christians changed the Roman winter solstice holiday into their own - what we today call Christmas.

But wait. The winter solstice happens on December 21st and 22nd. We still have the January 6th thing too. What's going on? When Christians took over the Roman winter solstice holiday, they did keep some of the parts. Remember that part about the sun getting weaker and dying, then being reborn? Christians heard this, and they said "We also know about a Son dying and then being reborn!" (See, they viewed the resurrection as a rebirth from the grave). They took

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the Roman holiday on December 22nd for the birth of the sun and added three days to it - to represent the 3 days from Easter - and they came up with (drum roll please....) December 25th. That is why Christmas is on December 25th. And early on, you had some Christians celebrating Jesus's birth on December 25th while others celebrated on January 6th. Even today, in some cultures, Epiphany on January 6th is a bigger celebration than Christmas on December 25th. Eventually, what happened was they made Christmas extend all the way from December 25 to January 6 (that's where we get the 12 days of Christmas). That's why we still celebrate both holidays today.

Please remember in all of this discussion about dates and festivals - we celebrate Jesus's birth every year not because the day is important, but because the *birth* is important! We celebrate Jesus's birth because of Jesus - because the God revealed through Jesus the Christ joins us in every part of our humanity. When the Word became flesh, he did it just like we do. Jesus is born just like us so that we can be born again just like him. In the birth of Christ in the dirt of an ordinary stable, the chasm between Creator and creation is healed. God is with us!

If you've read all the way to here, you deserve an extra Christmas present! Wow, what a doozy! My hope is that, if nothing else, maybe you thought this was interesting. Maybe it's just kindling for a warm fire beside which you'll read something better. Whatever the case, I wish you a very merry Christmas! Don't celebrate the birth of the sun, but the birth of the One who created the sun. Do not fret the dying of the light, but take heart and hope in the One who shines a light in the darkness that the darkness cannot overcome. And to the One who is able to do immeasurably far more than all we can ask or imagine be glory and honor forever and ever. Amen.

Grace and peace to you!
Pastor Evan



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Prayer Requests

Cindy Wimbley

Ralph Fitch

John Graham

Fred Clement

Family of Helen Allen

Scotty Millam

Scarlett McBride

Doris Taylor

Brittney Gilbert

Family of Shirley Fitch

Dennis & Marsha Millam

Gene Vidoni

Sarah Myers

Linda Dawson



*Prayer Requests
for Our Nursing
Home Residents*

Heartland Nursing & Rehab

Casey Health Care

Ruth Fitch

Simple Blessings

David Hickox



**Saturday,
December 17th
8:00 – 11:00 am**

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DECEMBER SERVING SCHEDULES

ELDERS: 12/4 Dan Winn, 12/11 Sherri Butcher, 12/18 Sharon Durham,
12/24 Sharon Durham, 12/25 Peggy Hickox

DEACONS: 12/4 Brad Hickox, Cassie Ramsey, Connie Roberts
12/11 Cathy Sherwood, Devan Smith, Cheryl Stifal
12/18 Michelle Wagner, Darlene Winn, Jennifer Winschief
12/24 Lynda Graham, Brad Hickox, Cassie Ramsey
12/25 Connie Roberts, Cathy Sherwood, Devan Smith

CHALLENGER REFRESHMENTS: 12/4 Sharon D, 12/11 Grahams, 12/18 Peggy H,
12/25 Grace L

ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

Wednesday, December 7th @ 6:30 pm Church Board Meeting, Please notice change of time.
Saturday, December 10th, 8:30 to 10:30 am at the Casey United Methodist Christmas Cookie and Candy Caper. Blitzen's Breakfast Bananza, Cookie and Candy Caper, Frosty's Flea Market and Holly-Days Shoppe.
Monday, December 12th @ 5:30 pm Dinner & a Prayer for Women
Friday, December 16th, 3:00 – 5:00 pm Fellowship Hall Reserved
Saturday, December 17th, 8:00-11:00 am Kids' Christmas Shop
Tuesday, December 20th, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm C-W Headstart Reserved Fellowship Hall
Saturday, December 24th, Christmas Eve Services 7:00 pm
Sunday, December 25th, MERRY CHRISTMAS! Sunday School and Worship at usual times.
Wednesday, December 28th, 6:30 pm Elders Meeting

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1 – Blake Ramsey
2 – Ed Allen
4 – Marge Allen
7 – Kenny Whitton
7 – Dan Winn

10 – Gene Whitton
14 – Moe Wimbley
16 – Ed & Marge Allen
19 – Curt Wheat
21 – Brenna Peterson

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4 Elder: Dan Winn	5 MML 9 am	6	7 Church Board Mtg. 6:30 pm	8	9	10
11 Elder: Sherri Butcher	12 MML 9 am Dinner & a Prayer 5:30 pm	13	14	15	16 Fellowship Hall Reserved 3-5 pm	17 Kids' Christmas Shop 8-11 am
18 Elder: Sharon Durham	19 MML 9 am	20 Fellowship Hall Reserved 9am-2pm	21	22	23	24 Elder: Sharon Durham
25 Elder: Peggy Hickox 	26 MML 9 am	27	28 Elders Mtg. 6:30 pm	29	30	31 
		FH – Fellowship Hall MML – Monday Morning Ladies <u>SUNDAYS</u> <u>9:00 am Sunday School, 10:00 am Worship</u>				