



CHRISTMAS EDITION

Volume 13 Issue 12

Crew Meetings & Activities 2017

Jan 21 Christmas/NY Party

Feb 18 mtg

Mar 18 Mtg

Apr 15 Aurora Fest (first alien in TX) mtg

May 20 mtg

Jun 17 mtg

All above meeting are subject to change. Normally we meet at Shady Oaks BBQ at 3:00 p.m. on the dates above (unless otherwise mentioned.)

The Twelve Days of Christmas

You're all familiar with the Christmas song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas" I think. To most it's a delightful nonsense rhyme set to music. But it had a quite serious purpose when it was written.

It is a good deal more than just a repetitious melody with pretty phrases and a list of strange gifts.

Catholics in England during the period 1558 to 1829, when Parliament finally emancipated Catholics in England, were prohibited from ANY practice of their faith by law - private OR public. It was a crime to BE a Catholic.

"The Twelve Days of Christmas" was written in England as one of the "catechism songs" to help young Catholics learn the tenets of their faith - a memory aid, when to be caught with anything in **writing** indicating adherence to the Catholic faith could not only get you imprisoned, it could get you hanged, or shortened by a head - or hanged, drawn and quartered, a rather peculiar and ghastly punishment I'm not aware was ever practiced anywhere else. Hanging, drawing and quartering involved hanging a person by the neck until they had almost, but not quite, suffocated to death; then the party was taken down from the gallows, and disembowelled while still alive; and while the entrails were still lying on the

December 2016

street, where the executioners stomped all over them, the victim was tied to four large farm horses, and literally torn into five parts - one to each limb and the remaining torso.

The songs gifts are hidden meanings to the teachings of the faith. The "true love" mentioned in the song doesn't refer to an earthly suitor, it refers to God Himself. The "me" who receives the presents refers to every baptized person. The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge which feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings, much in memory of the expression of Christ's sadness over the fate of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have sheltered thee under my wings, as a hen does her chicks, but thou wouldst not have it so..." The other symbols mean the following:

2 Turtle Doves = The Old and New Testaments

3 French Hens = Faith, Hope and Charity, the Theological Virtues

4 Calling Birds = the Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists

5 Golden Rings = The first Five Books of the Old Testament, the "Pentateuch", which gives the history of man's fall from grace.

6 Geese A-laying = the six days of creation

7 Swans A-swimming = the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven sacraments

8 Maids A-milking = the eight beatitudes

9 Ladies Dancing = the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit

10 Lords A-leaping = the ten commandments

11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful apostles

12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

Why Christmas is Celebrated In December

It's very tough for us North Americans to imagine Mary and Joseph trudging to Bethlehem in anything but, as Christina Rossetti memorably described it, "the bleak mid-winter," surrounded by "snow on snow on snow." To us, Christmas and December are inseparable. But for the first three centuries of Christianity, Christmas wasn't in December—or on the calendar anywhere.

If observed at all, the celebration of Christ's birth was usually lumped in with Epiphany (January 6), one of the church's earliest established feasts. Some church leaders even opposed the idea of a birth celebration. [Origen](#) (c.185-c.254) preached that it would be wrong to honor Christ in the same way Pharaoh and Herod were honored. Birthdays were for pagan gods.

Not all of Origen's contemporaries agreed that Christ's birthday shouldn't be celebrated, and some began to speculate on the date (actual records were apparently long lost). [Clement of Alexandria](#) (c.150-c.215) favored May 20 but noted that others had argued for April 18, April 19, and May 28. Hippolytus (c.170-c.236) championed January 2. November 17, November 20, and March 25 all had backers as well. A Latin treatise written around 243 pegged March 21, because that was believed to be the date on which God created the sun. [Polycarp](#) (c.69-c.155) had followed the same line of reasoning to conclude that Christ's birth and baptism most likely occurred on Wednesday, because the sun was created on the fourth day.

The eventual choice of December 25, made perhaps as early as 273, reflects a convergence of Origen's concern about pagan gods and the church's identification of God's son with the celestial sun. December 25 already hosted two other related festivals: *natalis solis invicti* (the Roman "birth of the unconquered sun"), and the birthday of Mithras, the Iranian "Sun of Righteousness" whose worship was popular with Roman soldiers. The winter solstice, another celebration of the sun, fell just a few days earlier. Seeing that pagans were already exalting deities with some parallels to the true deity, church leaders decided to commandeer the date and introduce a new festival.

Western Christians first celebrated Christmas on December 25 in 336, after [Emperor Constantine](#) had declared Christianity the empire's favored religion. Eastern churches, however, held on to January 6 as the date for Christ's birth

and his baptism. Most easterners eventually adopted December 25, celebrating Christ's birth on the earlier date and his baptism on the latter, but the Armenian church celebrates his birth on January 6. Incidentally, the Western church does celebrate Epiphany on January 6, but as the arrival date of the Magi rather than as the date of Christ's baptism.

Another wrinkle was added in the 16th century when Pope Gregory devised a new calendar, which was unevenly adopted. The Eastern Orthodox and some Protestants retained the Julian calendar, which meant they celebrated Christmas 13 days later than their Gregorian counterparts. Most—but not all—of the Christian world now agrees on the Gregorian calendar and the December 25 date.

The pagan origins of the Christmas date, as well as pagan origins for many Christmas customs (gift-giving and merrymaking from Roman Saturnalia; greenery, lights, and charity from the Roman New Year; Yule logs and various foods from Teutonic feasts), have always fueled arguments against the holiday. "It's just paganism wrapped with a Christian bow," naysayers argue. But while kowtowing to worldliness must always be a concern for Christians, the church has generally viewed efforts to reshape culture—including holidays—positively. As a theologian asserted in 320, "We hold this day holy, not like the pagans because of the birth of the sun, but because of him who made it."

What is Hanukkah

Hanukkah (sometimes transliterated Chanukkah) is a Jewish holiday celebrated for eight days and nights. It starts on the 25th of the Jewish month of Kislev, which coincides with late November-late December on the secular calendar.

In Hebrew, the word "hanukkah" means "dedication." The name reminds us that this holiday commemorates the rededication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem following the Jewish victory over the Syrian-Greeks in 165 B.C.E.

The Hanukkah Story

In 168 B.C.E. the Jewish Temple was seized by Syrian-Greek soldiers and dedicated to the worship of the god Zeus. This upset the Jewish people, but many were afraid to fight back for fear of reprisals. Then in 167 B.C.E. the Syrian-Greek emperor Antiochus made the observance of Judaism an offense punishable by death. He also ordered all Jews to worship Greek gods.

Jewish resistance began in the village of Modiin, near Jerusalem.

Greek soldiers forcibly gathered the Jewish villages and told them to bow down to an idol, then eat the flesh of a pig—both practices that are forbidden to Jews. A Greek officer ordered Mattathias, a High Priest, to acquiesce to their

demands, but Mattathias refused. When another villager stepped forward and offered to cooperate on Mattathias' behalf, the High Priest became outraged. He drew his sword and killed the villager, then turned on the Greek officer and killed him too. His five sons and the other villagers then attacked the remaining soldiers, killing all of them.

Mattathias and his family went into hiding in the mountains, where other Jews wishing to fight against the Greeks joined them. Eventually they succeeded in retaking their land from the Greeks. These rebels became known as the Maccabees, or Hasmoneans.

Once the Maccabees had regained control they returned to the Temple in Jerusalem. By this time it had been spiritually defiled by being used for the worship of foreign gods and also by practices such as sacrificing swine. Jewish troops were determined to purify the Temple by burning ritual oil in the Temple's menorah for eight days. But to their dismay, they discovered that there was only one day's worth of oil left in the Temple. They lit the menorah anyway and to their surprise the small amount of oil lasted the full eight days.

This is the miracle of the Hanukkah oil that is celebrated every year when Jews light a special menorah known as a hanukkiyah for eight days. One candle is lit on the first night of Hanukkah, two on the second, and so on, until eight candles are lit.

Significance of Hanukkah

According to Jewish law, Hanukkah is one of the less important [Jewish holidays](#). However, Hanukkah has become much more popular in modern practice because of its proximity to Christmas.

Hanukkah falls on the twenty-fifth day of the Jewish month of Kislev. Since the [Jewish calendar](#) is lunar based, every year the first day of Hanukkah falls on a different day – usually sometime between late November and late December. Because many Jews live in predominately Christian societies, over time Hanukkah has become much more festive and Christmas-like. Jewish children receive gifts for Hanukkah – often one gift for each of the eight nights of the holiday. Many parents hope that by making Hanukkah extra special their children won't feel left out of all the Christmas festivities going on around them.

Hanukkah Traditions

Every community has its unique Hanukkah traditions, but there are some traditions that are almost universally practiced. They are: lighting the [hanukkiyah](#), spinning the [dreidel](#) and [eating fried foods](#).

- **Lighting the hanukkiyah:** Every year it is customary to commemorate the miracle of the Hanukkah oil by lighting candles on a hanukkiyah. The hanukkiyah is

lit every night for eight nights. Learn more about the hanukkiyah in: [What Is a Hanukkiyah?](#) | [How to Light the Hanukkah Menorah](#) | [Hanukkah Candle Lighting Blessings](#).

- **Spinning the dreidel:** A popular Hanukkah game is spinning the dreidel, which is a four-sided top with Hebrew letters written on each side. Read [The Hanukkah Dreidel](#) to learn more about the dreidel, the meaning of the letters and how to play the game. Gelt, which are chocolate coins covered with tin foil, are part of this game.
- **Eating fried foods:** Because Hanukkah celebrates the miracle of oil, it is traditional to eat fried foods such as latkes and sufganiyot during the holiday. Latkes are pancakes made out of potatoes and onions, which are fried in oil and then served with applesauce. Sufganiyot (singular: sufganiyah) are jelly-filled donuts that are fried and sometimes dusted with confectioners' sugar before eating.

Why Do We have Christmas Trees

The evergreen tree was an ancient symbol of life in the midst of winter. Romans decorated their houses with evergreen branches during the New Year, and ancient inhabitants of northern Europe cut evergreen trees and planted them in boxes inside their houses in wintertime. Many early Christians were hostile to such practices. The second-century theologian Tertullian condemned those Christians who celebrated the winter festivals, or decorated their houses with laurel boughs in honor of the emperor:

"Let them over whom the fires of hell are imminent, affix to their posts, laurels doomed presently to burn: to them the testimonies of darkness and the omens of their penalties are suitable. *You* are a light of the world, and a tree ever green. If you have renounced temples, make not your own gate a temple."

But by the early Middle Ages, the legend had grown that when Christ was born in the dead of winter, every tree throughout the world miraculously shook off its ice and snow and produced new shoots of green. At the same time, Christian missionaries preaching to Germanic and Slavic peoples were taking a more lenient approach to cultural practices—such as evergreen trees. These missionaries believed that the Incarnation proclaimed Christ's lordship over those natural symbols that had previously been used for the worship of pagan gods. Not only individual human beings, but cultures, symbols, and traditions could be converted. Of course, this did not mean that the worship of pagan gods themselves was tolerated. According to one legend, the eighth-century missionary Boniface, after cutting down an oak tree sacred to the pagan god Thor (and used for human sacrifice), pointed to a nearby fir tree instead as a symbol of the love and mercy of God.

Paradise trees

Not until the Renaissance are there clear records of trees being used as a symbol of Christmas—beginning in Latvia in 1510 and Strasbourg in 1521. Legend credits the Protestant reformer Martin Luther with inventing the Christmas tree, but the story has little historical basis.

The most likely theory is that Christmas trees started with medieval plays. Dramas depicting biblical themes began as part of the church's worship, but by the late Middle Ages, they had become rowdy, imaginative performances dominated by laypeople and taking place in the open air. The plays celebrating the Nativity were linked to the story of creation—in part because Christmas Eve was also considered the feast day of Adam and Eve. Thus, as part of the play for that day, the Garden of Eden was symbolized by a "paradise tree" hung with fruit.

These plays were banned in many places in the 16th century, and people perhaps began to set up "paradise trees" in their homes to compensate for the public celebration they could no longer enjoy. The earliest Christmas trees (or evergreen branches) used in homes were referred to as "paradises." They were often hung with round pastry wafers symbolizing the Eucharist, which developed into the cookie ornaments decorating German Christmas trees today.

The custom gained popularity throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, against the protests of some clergy. Lutheran minister Johann von Dannhauer, for instance, complained (like Tertullian) that the symbol distracted people from the true evergreen tree, Jesus Christ. But this did not stop many churches from setting up Christmas trees inside the sanctuary. Alongside the tree often stood wooden "pyramids"—stacks of shelves bearing candles, sometimes one for each family member. Eventually these pyramids of candles were placed on the tree, the ancestors of our modern Christmas tree lights and ornaments. (All of these articles came from various religious spots on the internet. They are considered trustworthy and knowledgeable or as much as anything can be on the internet.)

Ship's Services

JAN birthdays : Alan Goulet Jan 30

Renew Memberships with Fleet: Everyone is renewed!!

Upcoming Movies:

Assassin's Creed Dec 21

Passengers Dec 21

Hidden Figures Jan 6

Resident Evil: Final Chapter Jan 27

Advertisements



Custom Vinyl Decals, Gifts, Apparel, Editable Printouts, etc.

Go to: www.etsy.com/shop/LauraWashburnDesigns



Meetings for the *USS Regulator* are held every month at 1500hrs at Shady Oaks BBQ at Sand Shell & Hwy 35. Usually on the third Saturday of every month. For information contact CO Capt Michael Cross

at
regulator@region3.org
or visit our web site

<http://ussregulator.weebly.com/>

Regulator Charge! Newsletter is a monthly publication produced to inform members of upcoming events with the ship, with the region, and with the fleet. As well as things of interest everyone might like to know about. Information in this publication is obtained through emails and internet sites. The *USS Regulator* is a non-profit organization affiliated with STARFLEET. Although we are Star Trek based, this club does enjoy and encourage anything that is SciFi related such as Battlestar Galatica, Stargate, Star Wars, X-Men, Superman, etc. This is an 'on line' publication for all those who have email. If requested a printed copy can be sent to you at your home address.