




Royal Canadian Legion



Branch 625 Richmond



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Foxy's Tales



*December 2025
Christmas*





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Branch Executive Meetings

are the Third Thursday of each month at 10:00 am.

Branch General Meetings

are the fourth Friday in January, March, June, September and November at 11 am and the third Thursday of May at 7 pm.

Website is: www.richmondlegion.ca

Facebook: Royal Canadian Legion Branch 625

Deadline to submit for the next bulletin is always the third Friday of March, June, September and the second Friday in December by 12 noon please

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Christmas Wrap Up

I made a whopper of a mistake by doing the December 2025 bulletin at the end of November rather than mid-December!

This meant that the details of our annual Senior's Christmas Dinner – we really have to start calling this lunch since we serve at 1 pm - were not included.

It also means that maybe this message will stand apart from the usual bulletin information and more attention will be given to those who volunteered (or were drafted!).

One other mistake is that I totally forgot to take pictures the day of the dinner!

But let's get to all the people that I have to thank for helping to make this year's event another amazing success.

There are many areas that need to be covered including picking the date, organizing people to shop, make the food, decorate the hall, set up the tables, serve the food, clear the tables, do the dishes and clean everything up. Lots of steps, lots of planning and Ray, Pat and I get planning in early to mid-October.

We try to get the November 11th open house done with first, but in early or mid-October the date is picked—usually the first or second Sunday in December. For the date, we rely on Ray Huet, Branch member, Donations chair and a member of the Knights of Columbus at St Philip Church - this last part is important and will make sense in a minute.

This date is determined by a few factors, I believe one is how well hunting season is going!

Once the date is picked then I contact St Philip Church to arrange the use of their kitchen on the day before & the Sunday morning of the lunch.

Ray organizes his fellow Knights to help with the prep, cooking and serving of the main meal.

Pat McGrath organizes people to decorate the hall, make the pies, set up the hall the day before and organizes the kitchen helpers for the day of.

To the decorators of the hall: Johnny Villeneuve and Tom Louks set up the tree & do the ceiling swags; and to Barbara Brewer, Pat McGrath, Sharon Murphy, Marylou and Keith Thurrott & Wendy Virtue for decorating the walls & tree - thank you.

To the people who set up on Saturday afternoon: Judy MacKenzie, Pat McGrath, Bill & Charlene Murphy, Keith & Marylou Thurrott, Sharon Murphy & Johnny Villeneuve, Wendy & Dave Virtue (and me), thank you.

To the pie makers: June Alford, Kerry Cook, Eileen Cosham, Eileen Kavanagh, Pat McGrath, Kelly McKenna, Charlene Murphy, Marybette Riddell, Marlyn Storey and Marylou Thurrott - thank you.



To the shoppers: Ray Huet for all the dinner components, to Pat McGrath for the accessories (pickles, buns, cranberries, whipped cream and poinsettias) , thank you. I picked up the door prizes, chocolates for the tables etc.

To the chefs: Ray Huet, Bernie Roosen, Dean Pierunek (this is the forth straight year for these 3guys) and John Evans, thank you. Even longer for Ray and Bernie - they've been helping since 2015!

Ray Huet picks up all the food needed for the main meal (has been for several years now) - the turkeys, the potatoes, the veggies (turnip & one other) the stuffing ingredients, the gravy (the most important part of all in my opinion!). Ray, Bernie, Dean and John spent the day before in the church kitchen preparing and cooking 7 turkeys. While they were roasting, the potatoes and veggies were prepped. On Sunday morning the veggies were cooked, gravy was made and it all got moved to the Legion hall. These guys help plate the food as well, then after they have a bite to eat they take the humungous pots back to the church kitchen to clean them out. (I think perhaps maybe Maureen MacAulay has a hand in the above endeavours as well!

To the platers: I believe it was Ray, Bernie, Dean and John along with chief plater Maureen MacAulay who dished up the food, thank you. This part is really important because giving too large portions means it is too much for our guests to eat and therefore gets wasted.

To the servers: Kerry Cook, George Reid, Marybette Riddell, Elizabeth Vickers, Lily Virtue along with student volunteers Leonie and Gabriella. I have not forgotten Meagan Meades and her partner Jason - it is worth noting that Meagan began volunteering when she was at South Carleton High School and this is the 10th maybe 11th time, she has helped and I think this is Jason's 2nd or 3rd! Thank you.

Thanks to Wendy Virtue and Charlene Murphy for plating all the pies and getting the tea & coffee made.

To the clean up crew (clearing tables, washing, drying & putting dishes away, packing up the left overs: Kerry Cook, Maureen MacAulay, Judy MacKenzie, Pat McGrath, Meagan Meades & Jason, Georgia Read, Marybette Riddell, Mary Roosen, Marylou Thurrott, Elizabeth Vickers, Lily Virtue, Wendy Virtue, Leonie and Gabriella (and me), thank you.



Thanks to Tom Louks and Tom McKay for delivering meals to our sick members.

To Irwin McCaffery for helping the diners from their cars into the front door, helping to clean up and for making the lovely wooden candle holders that were shared among the volunteers. They were very popular Irwin. Thank you.

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To Kerry Cook and Elizabeth Vickers for relieving me at the front door when I was handing out coat tickets & hanging up coats– I was not planning on doing that so therefore was not dressed for it, thank you.

To Elizabeth Vickers and Irwin McCaffrey for helping people retrieve their coats on their way out, thank you.

I think some one else may have helped with coats at the door as well so thank you.

To Tony McGrath and Judy McKenzie for checking people in at the door, thank you. Everyone who attends gets their names in the draw for door prizes (one per couple).

To the bar tender Sharon Murphy, thank you. Sharon also helped with the clean up.

To Iain Clogg for providing the Christmas music, thank you.

To President Brian Goss and city councillor David Brown for their words of welcome before the meal, thank you.

To Louis Seward for leading us in grace before the meal, thank you.

To our city councillor David Brown, Sharon Murphy, Meagan Meades & Jason for helping me pass out the door prizes, thank you. We had over 35 door prizes this year!



Thank you also to everyone for their contributions to the Richmond Food Bank—\$765 cash (thanks for counting the cash Tony McGrath) and 4 bags of groceries were collected. Thanks to Tom Louks for delivering it all to the Food Bank.

Thanks to everyone who helped in any way, shape or form - if I have forgotten any names please let me know.

On another note: thank you to Irwin McCaffrey for once again volunteering to represent our Branch to pass out gifts to the veterans at the Perley Health. We are expected to have someone at all meetings and various events in our Zone, but it doesn't always happen so when someone volunteers to do so it is appreciated.

Thank you to everyone who helped in any way!

Merry Christmas & A happy healthy 2026 to all!

Wendy Ryan

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Holiday Celebrations

*The following was copied and combined from various online websites
Hope you find it as interesting as I did.*

UK introduction: *Whether you celebrate Christmas or not, with Christmas songs, adverts, and decorations everywhere you go, it can still feel very present in your day-to-day life throughout December.*

However, while around 91% of the UK plans to celebrate Christmas this year, it's important to remember that many people don't celebrate the holiday and that several other important festivities take place around this time of year, too.

One thing that many winter holidays have in common is a focus on togetherness, gratitude, and community. So, in the spirit of this time of year, we thought we'd celebrate the diversity of the festive season.

Note that over 90% of Canadians celebrate Christmas although not all celebrate as a religious holiday.

Hanukkah, also called the 'festival of lights', is a holiday commonly celebrated in the Hebrew calendar. Traditionally, it takes place in late November or early December and commemorates the Maccabean revolt, when Jews fought for their religious freedom against the Greek-Syrian army in ancient Jerusalem. Hanukkah is observed for eight nights and days, starting on the 25th day of Kislev according to the Hebrew calendar, which may occur at any time from November 28 to December 27 in the Gregorian calendar.

Like many religious celebrations, the holiday is based on the story of a miracle. Around 160 BC, Israel was under the rule of Antiochus III the Great (a Seleucid king), who outlawed the practice of Judaism and forced Jews to worship the Greek Gods. On his orders, the Jewish Holy Temple was desecrated and rededicated to Zeus. After years of revolt, the vastly outnumbered Jewish forces eventually won against their oppressors. Once the Jews had started to rebuild their most sacred temple, they lit a menorah – a seven-armed golden candelabra.

The story goes that there was very little oil remaining in the menorah – just enough for one day. However, the menorah burned for eight full nights before going out. For this reason, Hanukkah is celebrated over eight days beginning on the 25th day of Kislev in the Hebrew calendar. This year, Hanukkah starts on 14th December and runs until 22nd December.

The symbol of Hanukkah is a special menorah called a hanukkiah, which has nine arms. This is traditionally displayed in a window, and for eight nights, a candle is added and lit from the central candle. Throughout the celebrations, Jews often eat foods cooked in oil to remember the miraculous longevity of the oil in the menorah. These include fried potato cakes called latkes and jelly-filled doughnuts called sufganiyot. Families also exchange gifts and play with square spinning tops called dreidels.

Saint Nicholas Day: December 6, also called the Feast of Saint Nicholas, is observed on December 6 by families from Northern European Christian countries and on December 19 by Eastern Europeans. Saint Nicholas Day is the feast day of Saint Nicholas of Myra and part of the season of Advent.

Families from Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and other areas across the world, leave their shoes out on the evening of December 6, hoping St. Nicholas will fill them with small gifts and coins. This symbolizes the good deeds performed by St. Nicholas. It was said that as people left their shoes to dry by the fire at night, St. Nicholas would creep in and fill the shoes with food or money. The day is also associated with doing good deeds.



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Bodhi Day. Bodhi Day is celebrated annually on 8th December and is a Buddhist holiday celebrating the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha. Buddhists commemorate the day that Gautama completed his meditation beneath the Bodhi tree.

Upon awakening, Gautama is said to have had several profound realisations, which became the founding principles of Buddhism – namely The Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths. From that day, Gautama is referred to as the Buddha, which means ‘enlightened one’.

Buddhists celebrate through meditation, hoping to one day become enlightened and reach Nirvana. Other traditions include hanging multi-coloured lights around the house to represent the eight paths. These lights are lit for 30 days, alongside a candle representing enlightenment. People also enjoy tea and cake with friends and family. Many Buddhists also decorate their home with a ficus religiosa tree – the same genus as the Bodhi tree that the Buddha sat beneath. This tree is adorned with lights, beads (symbolising unity), and three ornaments to represent the Three Jewels of Buddhism.

Feast Day of Our Lady Guadalupe December 12. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans often celebrate the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico who symbolizes patriotism and devotion. Millions of pilgrims typically visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in December to celebrate the festival, which marks one of several apparitions of the Virgin Mary that some Catholic believers say was witnessed by an Indigenous Mexican man in 1531. The Virgin Mary’s face is abundant in Mexico—in homes, shops and shrines.

Santa Lucia Day: December 13. In Sweden and some parts of Italy, December 13 marks the start of the Christmas season with **Santa Lucia Day**. The Christian martyr St. Lucia was killed for bringing food to Christians hiding in Roman catacombs in the early 4th century. She wore a wreath with candles to light her way while keeping her hands free to carry the food. In Swedish-Canadian homes, families join for a huge breakfast, the star of which is the *lussekatter*, an s-shaped saffron bun.

Winter solstice is the astronomical first day of winter in the Northern Hemisphere. It marks the exact moment when half of Earth is tilted the farthest away from the sun, marking the shortest day of the year and impending colder weather. For people who live in the Southern Hemisphere, the winter solstice takes place in June. Ancient people built many monuments to celebrate the winter solstice, which is still celebrated by many people to recognize the beginning of winter.

Simbang Gabi: December 16–24. In the Philippines, **Simbang Gabi** is a nine-day series of masses leading up to Christmas. Beginning on December 16, daily masses are held at different times. This tradition dates back to Spanish colonization.

Churches are often decorated with lights and lanterns, with a Nativity scene on display. Shortly after each mass, food stalls outside the churches sell treats such as *bibingka*, *puto* (rice cakes) and coffee. On Christmas Eve, a special service called Misa de Gallo is held at midnight to celebrate the birth of Jesus.



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Yule. Celebrated on the winter solstice – the shortest day of the year and the longest night of the year - 21st December 2025 – Yule is one of the oldest known festivals observed at this time of year. Yule celebrates the re-emergence of the sun and the days beginning to grow longer again.

It was originally celebrated by the Pagan and Norse people of Northern Europe and is still celebrated by many communities today.

The original celebration was tied to worshipping the sun and honoured the rebirth of life and the year. Ancient Norse people believed the sun was a wheel upon which the seasons turned, so they'd ward off the darkness of the winter months by drinking, lighting bonfires, and sharing tales. Many Yule traditions have been adopted by other cultures and religions, particularly Christianity. Besides the more overt inheritance of the yule log, other customs like the hanging of mistletoe (which was holy to the druids of the British Isles) and enjoying a feast are borrowed from the ancient festival.

Christmas. December 25. In the Christian faith, Christmas is the historical celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Whether celebrated for this religious reason or solely as a cultural celebration, Christmas traditions vary around the world. Christmas, the annual holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, is celebrated in Canada according to each person's culture, spiritual beliefs and family traditions. While many Canadians celebrate with Christmas trees, visits from Santa Claus, and dreams of snowy landscapes, Christmas falls during Australia's summer, where it is popular to go camping or to the beach over the holiday. Some Australians decorate a "Christmas Bush," a native Australian tree with small green leaves and flowers that turn red during the summer.

In England, Christmas traditions are similar to those in the United States, but instead of leaving milk and cookies for Santa Claus, children leave mince pies and brandy for Father Christmas. In Iceland, capital city Reykjavik turns into a winter wonderland with its Christmas market and for the children, there is not one but thirteen Santas, known as Yule Lads. One arrives each night in the thirteen days before Christmas, leaving small gifts in shoes left in window sills.

Boxing Day. Boxing Day takes place on December 26. Only celebrated in a few countries, the holiday originated in the United Kingdom during the Middle Ages. It was the day when the alms box, collection boxes for the poor often kept in churches, were opened and their content distributed, a tradition that still happens in some areas. It was also the day servants were traditionally given the day off to celebrate Christmas with their families.

Boxing Day has now become a public holiday in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, among other countries. In England, soccer matches and horse races often take place on Boxing Day. The Irish refer to the holiday as St. Stephen's Day, and they have their own tradition called hunting the wren, in which boys fasten a fake wren to a pole and parade it through town. The Bahamas celebrate Boxing Day with a street parade and festival called Junkanoo.

Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa is a modern African-American and pan-African holiday established in 1966 by Dr Maulana Karenga, a professor of African studies. Beginning on 26th December and ending on 1st January, Kwanzaa is a cultural festival celebrating African culture and community.

Kwanzaa centres around the Nguzo Saba, or 'The Seven Principles', which are: Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith). You can find a thorough explanation of the Nguzo Saba on the official Kwanzaa website.

At its heart, Kwanzaa is a celebration of connection and togetherness. As a non-religious holiday, Kwanzaa is celebrated by people of all different faiths, alongside other religious festivals they might be celebrating at this time of year.

Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti. In January, Sikhs worldwide celebrate the birthday of the 10th guru of the Sikh faith, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. This guru is a particularly significant figure in Sikhism, not only as a famed warrior, poet, and philosopher, but also due to his contributions to modern Sikh practices.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji is responsible for introducing the five K's of Sikhism – beliefs that many Sikhs live by. He also declared the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book) to be the final Sikh guru after his death, forever enshrining it as the faith's central holy text.

Continued on next page....

Guru Gobind Singh Ji stands as an admired and respected role model amongst Sikhs. His legend tells of courage in the face of invaders, which saw him establish the Khalsa – a group committed to the defence of Sikh people that still initiates members today.

The anniversary is celebrated around the world with prayer meetings and processions at gurdwaras (places of worship for Sikhs), as well as kirtan – gatherings at which hymns and verses are sung. Celebrants also take part in seva, which means ‘selfless service’, and is an important principle of the faith. Among other acts of service on this day, families distribute food to the poor.

Shōgatsu. While many cultures hold festivities to welcome in the new year, in Japan, the New Year (Shōgatsu) is the most important holiday in the calendar. New Year’s celebrations involve family get-togethers as businesses close from the 1st to the 3rd of January. Many celebrations focus more heavily on beginning anew. On New Year’s Eve, families commonly undertake a deep cleaning of their house called oosouji, so that the coming year can start on a blank slate. Co-workers will often attend ‘year-forgetting’ parties called bōnenkai, where they’ll drink and forget any of the year’s woes and hardships, and look forward to the next. To that end, workers are typically expected to complete all outstanding work before the year ends.

A variety of traditional foods are eaten. For example, Toshikoshi soba, a simple and healthy buckwheat noodle dish, is enjoyed on New Year’s Eve, while ozoni (mochi soup with chicken and vegetables) is enjoyed on New Year’s Day. If you’d like to have a go at cooking these dishes, Just One Cookbook have great recipes for ozoni and Toshikoshi soba. Also served on 1st January are osechi ryori, or ‘seasonal/festive dishes’. These are an assortment of small meals, each with a special meaning.

On the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of January, many families follow the tradition of hatsumode – the first shrine visit of the year. Shrines and temples are extremely busy during the New Year period, with famous locations such as the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo hosting millions of visitors each day. As the new year begins at midnight, shrines across the country herald the event by ringing bells. It’s also become common for families and friends to send each other New Year’s postcards. People send their greetings via postcards specifically marked to be delivered on 1st January, with expressions of gratitude and hope for further kindness in the new year.

Ōmisoka, New Year’s Eve, is considered the second-most important day in Japanese tradition as it is the final day of the old year and the eve of New Year’s Day, the most important day of the year. Families gather on Ōmisoka for one last time in the old year to have a bowl of toshikoshi-soba or toshikoshi-udon, a tradition based on eating the long noodles to cross over from one year to the next.

At midnight, many visit shrines or temples for Hatsumōde. Shinto shrines prepare amazake to pass out to crowds and most Buddhist temples have large cast bells that are struck once for each of the 108 earthly desires believed to cause human suffering.

Diwali, is a festival of lights, celebrating the victory of Dharma over Adharma, light over dark, good over evil, and the blessings of that victory: freedom and enlightenment. Diwali is celebrated primarily by people of Hindu, Sikh and Jain faiths. On the night of Diwali, people light dozens of candles and diyas (clay lamps) throughout their homes and the streets to light up the night. Food, music and traditional dancing are highlights.

In the lead-up to Diwali, celebrants may prepare by cleaning and decorating temples, as well as their homes and workplaces. Places are brightly illuminated with candles and oil lamps, and devotional offers (*puja*) are made. People also often wash themselves with water and fragrant oils, or wear adornments and new, fine clothes.

Families may organise feasts in which sweets (*mithai*) and gifts are shared. Many cities, towns and villages set off fireworks in the evening and hold fairs (*melas*). However, the way Diwali is celebrated today may be very different depending on people’s culture, heritage or religious faith. The date is set according to the Hindu lunar calendar.

New Year’s Eve: December 31. The last day of the year, New Year’s Eve on the Gregorian calendar, is typically celebrated with food, drink, dancing and fireworks to welcome the new year at midnight. Some Christians attend a watchnight service.



Christmas, a Christian festival celebrating the birth of Jesus. Since the early 20th century, Christmas has also been a secular family holiday, observed by Christians and non-Christians alike, devoid of Christian elements, and marked by an increasingly elaborate exchange of gifts. In this secular Christmas celebration, a mythical figure named Santa Claus plays the pivotal role. Christmastime, running from Advent (or earlier) through Epiphany, is a season rich with countless religious and secular traditions that bring together family, faith, and culture while emphasizing themes of hope, joy, generosity, and goodwill.

The Nativity: Biblical accounts and significance

The only two scriptural accounts of Christ's birth are found in the New Testament: one in the Gospel According to Matthew and the other in the Gospel According to Luke. (The Gospel According to Mark begins with Jesus as an adult, and the Gospel According to John starts with his prehistorical existence.) Luke's Gospel shares details of the Annunciation, in which the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive a son by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be called Jesus, and Mary consents ("Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word"). Pregnant Mary then visits her relative Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist, in the Visitation, which is followed by Mary's moving hymn of praise, the Magnificat. The next chapter gives clues about the timing of Jesus' birth and notes that he was laid in a manger because there were no other accommodations in Bethlehem. It is here that the story of the angels visiting the shepherds in the fields, announcing the birth of the Messiah, is recorded, with the awestruck shepherds visiting the baby that night. The account of Jesus' infancy is concluded with his circumcision and naming, followed by his presentation at the Temple of Jerusalem, where he encounters the aged Simeon and the prophet Anna.

The Gospel According to Matthew begins with a genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, tracing his lineage from Abraham to King David to Joseph, Mary's husband. The gospel then describes how Joseph, betrothed to Mary, was told by an angel in a dream that Mary's pregnancy was conceived by the Holy Spirit in accordance with prophecy and that Jesus "will save his people from their sins". Christ's birth is noted with little other detail. The following chapter describes the famous visit of the Magi, guided by the Star of Bethlehem, and the Holy Family's escape to Egypt as Herod brutally massacres innocent children in search of the Christ child.

For Christians, Christmas marks the event in which God became human, born as a helpless baby in a stable for livestock. The Incarnation is a key moment in the story of salvation and is understood as the beginning of an act of divine love for humanity that culminates in Christ's death and Resurrection at Easter. The humble birth of Christ reveals the paradox of divine majesty expressed through human vulnerability and poverty. Indeed, the entire Christmas story is filled with miracles and symbolic contrasts: a pregnant virgin, lowly shepherds heralded by an angelic throng, and a Jewish baby gifted riches by Gentile Magi. Theologically, these events identify Jesus as the prophesied and long-awaited Messiah who will bring spiritual redemption. As one such fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, Jesus is also called Emmanuel in Matthew 1:23, meaning "God is with us," a name that expresses the Christian belief that God physically entered human history and continues to dwell with believers. The Christmas season is thus filled with hope and joy for Christians who celebrate that a loving and present God has provided a way for sinful humanity to be reconciled with the divine.

Development of Christmas as a holiday

The early Christian community distinguished between the identification of the date of Jesus' birth and the liturgical celebration of that event. The actual observance of the day of Jesus' birth was long in coming. In particular, during the first two centuries of Christianity there was strong opposition to recognizing birthdays of martyrs or, for that matter, of Jesus. Numerous Church Fathers offered sarcastic comments about the pagan custom of celebrating birthdays when, in fact, saints and martyrs should be honored on the days of their martyrdom—their true "birthdays," from the church's perspective.

Why Is Christmas on December 25? Does anyone really know when Jesus was born?

The precise origin of assigning December 25 as the birth date of Jesus is unclear. The New Testament provides no clues in this regard. December 25 was first identified as the date of Jesus' birth by Sextus Julius Africanus in 221 and later became the universally accepted date. One widespread explanation of the origin of this date is that December 25 was the Christianizing of the *dies solis invicti nati* ("day of the birth of the unconquered sun"), a holiday in the Roman Empire that celebrated the winter solstice as a symbol of the resurgence of the sun, the casting away of winter, and the heralding of the rebirth of spring and summer. Indeed, after December 25 had become widely accepted as the date of Jesus' birth, Christian writers frequently made the connection between the rebirth of the sun and the birth of the Son. One of the difficulties with this view is that it suggests a nonchalant willingness on the part of the Christian church to appropriate a pagan festival when the early church was so intent on distinguishing itself categorically from pagan beliefs and practices.

A second view suggests that December 25 became the date of Jesus' birth by a priori reasoning that identified the spring equinox as the date of the creation of the world and the fourth day of creation, when the light was created, as the day of Jesus' conception (i.e., March 25). December 25, nine months later, then became the date of Jesus' birth. For a long time, the celebration of Jesus' birth was observed in conjunction with his baptism, celebrated January 6.

Christmas began to be widely celebrated with a specific liturgy in the 9th century but did not attain the liturgical importance of either Good Friday or Easter, the other two major Christian holidays. In Roman Catholicism, where the holiday is a holy day of obligation, churches typically celebrate the first Christmas mass at midnight, and the liturgical color for vestments is white.

Eastern Orthodox churches honor Christmas on December 25. However, for those that continue to use the Julian calendar for their liturgical observances, this date corresponds to January 7 on the Gregorian calendar. The churches of the Oriental Orthodox communion celebrate Christmas variously. For example, in Armenia, the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion, the church uses its own calendar; the Armenian Apostolic Church honors January 6 as Christmas. In Ethiopia, where Christianity has had a home since the 4th century, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church celebrates Christmas on January 7. Most of the churches of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East celebrate Christmas on December 25; at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, however, the Syriac Orthodox celebrate Christmas on January 6 with the Armenian Apostolic Church. Congregations of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria follow the date of December 25 on the Julian calendar, which corresponds to Khiak 29 on the ancient Coptic calendar.

Protestant churches have increasingly held Christmas candlelight services late on the evening of December 24. A special service of "lessons and carols" intertwines Christmas carols with Scripture readings narrating salvation history from the Fall in the Garden of Eden to the coming of Christ. The service, inaugurated by E.W. Benson and adopted at the University of Cambridge, has become widely popular.

Given the importance of Christmas as one of the major Christian feast days, most European countries observe, under Christian influence, December 26 as a second Christmas holiday. This practice recalls the ancient Christian liturgical notion that the celebration of Christmas, as well as that of Easter and of Pentecost, should last the entire week. The weeklong observance, however, was successively reduced to Christmas Day and a single additional holiday on December 26.

Origin of the word *Christmas* and other names

The English term *Christmas* ("Christ's mass" or "mass on Christ's day") is of fairly recent origin. The term originated from the Middle English *Christemasse*, which came from the Old English *Cristes mæsse*. (In Roman Catholicism and certain other Christian groups, a mass is a celebration of the Eucharist.)

Contemporary customs in Europe and North America

Despite the religious importance of Christmas, few if any of the contemporary Christmas customs have their origin in theological or liturgical affirmations, and most are of fairly recent date. In addition, the intense preparation for Christmas that is part of the commercialization of the holiday has blurred the traditional liturgical distinction between Advent and the Christmas season, as can be seen by the placement of Christmas trees in church sanctuaries well before December 25. Many popular Christmas traditions take place throughout the month of December and are not limited to Christmas Day or the traditional 12 days of Christmastide that follow.

Christmas trees and lights

The Renaissance humanist Sebastian Brant recorded, in *Das Narrenschiff* (1494; *The Ship of Fools*), the custom of placing branches of fir trees in houses. Even though there is some uncertainty about the precise date and origin of the tradition of the Christmas tree, it appears that fir trees decorated with apples were first known in Strasbourg in 1605. The first use of candles on such trees is recorded by a Silesian duchess in 1611. Although the trees are traditionally associated with Christian symbolism, their modern use is largely secular. Many families place presents around an indoor Christmas tree—which can be fresh-cut, potted, or artificial—to be opened on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

In many places large fresh-cut or living Christmas trees are decorated outdoors in public areas, such as city centers and plazas. The exteriors of houses and businesses are also commonly decorated with festive lights throughout the month of December, and the sightseeing of Christmas light displays is a beloved tradition for many.

Breaking news: There will be a Sunday lunch at the Richmond Legion on the following dates:

January 25th, February 22nd, March 22nd, and April 19th. The menu will vary but will be simple - one week chili, then maybe soup & sandwiches, lasagna etc along with tea coffee & dessert.

Doors will open at 11:30 am and lunch will be served at 12 noon. Prices to be determined but they will be reasonable, hopefully between \$10 and \$15 per person.

You will have to reserve your seat by calling me at 613-838-9696 by noon on the Monday before the lunch and it will be limited to 75 people so don't wait, book early!

Watch for more information via email, Facebook or a phone call.



If you move or change your email address, please let me know by emailing me at wryan1955@hotmail.com so I can keep my contact list up to date and keep you up to date with relevant information via email.

If you have not received an email from me for a few months, please contact me at wryan1955@hotmail.com so I can update your email address.



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