

# PRESS-BY-LINE CONNECTIONS

## Letter from Pastor Larry Thorson



Dear Friends,

Here's an interesting question: was Jesus really born on December 25? Answer: probably not. While we definitely know from historical facts that Jesus was born, we're just not certain when.

Here's what we know: we can determine the approximate time of year Jesus was born if we know when his cousin John the Baptist was born. The Bible says Elizabeth (mother of John the Baptist) was in her sixth month of pregnancy when Jesus was conceived (Luke 1:24-36). John's father, Zachariah, was a priest serving in the Jerusalem temple during the course of Abijah (Luke 1:5). Historical calculations indicate this course of service corresponded to June 13-19 in that year. It was during this time of temple service that Zachariah learned that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a child named John (Luke 1:8-13). After he completed his service and traveled home, Elizabeth conceived (Luke 1:23-24).

Assuming John's conception took place near the end of June, adding nine months brings us to the end of March as the most likely time for John's birth. Adding another six months (the difference in ages between John and Jesus) brings us to the end of September as the likely time of Jesus' birth.

Luke also records that Jesus' parents came to Bethlehem to register in a Roman Census (Luke 2:1-4). Such censuses were not taken in winter, when temperatures often dropped below freezing and roads were in poor condition. Taking a census under such conditions would have been self-defeating. So Jesus' real birthday was probably around October 1.

So how did December 25 come to be known as Jesus' birthday? It was the Roman Catholic Church which established that date around 1038 AD in order to "christianize" a pagan holiday.

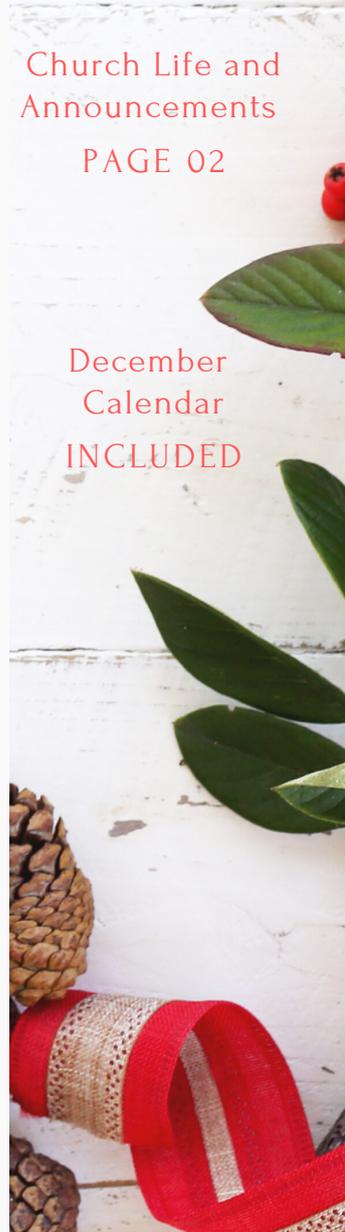
Why might all this be important? Because it's obvious that the date of Jesus' birth wasn't a big thing to God. Instead, for God, what's important is whether we believe Jesus is our Savior and we've been born again as a new person in Him. What that means is there's no need to stress or even lament over how commercialized Christmas has become. Instead of worrying about putting Jesus back in Christmas, let's make sure Jesus has been invited into our hearts and that we're making room for his renovations in our life. Is your heart, Christ's home? This would be a great season to rededicate your heart to the One who gave His all for us. Merry Christmas!

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Tis' the season! Join us for our annual Breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus on December 7th from 8am-11am. Invite your neighbors, friends and family to this festive fellowship event! A drawing will be held for a gift basket. Photos with Santa are \$5.



# BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

AND MRS. CLAUS  
PHOTO WITH SANTA

Saturday, Dec 7

- **Advent begins December 1st and concludes December 22nd. Devotionals are available to those who are interested.**
- **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will begin at 6:00 pm.**
- **Session Meeting will be held December 17th at 7:00pm.**
- **We will be accepting toy and toiletry offerings for Loaves and Fishes up until December 12th.**
- **Each year during the Advent and Christmas season we contribute to the Christmas joy offerings . These will be accepted on December 22nd & 24th.**
- **Christmas party on December 15th following the service. Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share. Optional \$10 wrapped-gift exchange.**

## NAMING THE NEW PRESBYTERY

With the upcoming union of Stockton and Sacramento Presbyteries, we have the opportunity to help determine what name this new body will be called. No longer Stockton or Sacramento, we will merge into one— with a shared budget, shared staff, joint vision, and a new name. You are invited to think about our new unified Presbytery and a name that might best describe this new reality. Please submit your suggestions to [statedclerk@presbyteryofstockton.com](mailto:statedclerk@presbyteryofstockton.com) by January 1. You are welcome to submit as many names as you like and from all those collected, one will be selected. The winner will receive a two night stay at the Zephyr Conference Grounds.



"For God  
so loved  
the world  
that he  
gave his  
one and  
only Son"

JOHN 3:16

