

St. James eNewsletter

SUNDAY, January 1, 2012
HAPPY NEW YEAR

Prayer of the Week

O Lord, make our goings aright in the ways of peace. O Lord, direct and guide our souls and the souls of all the faithful to walk in the way of righteousness and into life eternal. Amen

Sunday Bible Readings

Isaiah 51:15-52:3
Hebrews 13:18-25
Luke 22:24-30

Requiem Services

For Hokehankist Requests, please call the Church Office by Thursday noon.

Website

Visit our website to view the **photos and videos.**
www.stjamesva.org/photos.html



The Origin and Meaning of the Christmas Tree

The Christmas tree is one of the most popular and cherished Christmas customs. Each year, 35-40 million live trees are purchased and decorated in the United States alone. But when, where, and how did this custom begin? What is the origin of the Christmas tree? What does it mean?

There is scholarly consensus that the Christmas tree originated in Germany. Indeed, the earliest record of an evergreen tree being used and decorated (but without lights) for Christmas is 1521 in the German region of Alsace.

From the mid-seventeenth century the Christmas tree slowly grew in popularity and use. However, it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that the use of the Christmas tree grew into the general German custom that it is today. Also at this time it spread to the Slavic people of eastern Europe. The Christmas tree was probably first used in America about 1700 when the first wave of German immigration settled in western Pennsylvania.

The evergreens have been a symbol of rebirth from ancient times. Bringing greenery into one's home, often at the time of the winter solstice, symbolized life in the midst of death in many cultures.

Another custom was to be found in the homes of Christians on Dec. 24 since the late Middle Ages. A large candle called the "Christmas light," symbolizing Christ who is the light of the world, was lit on Christmas Eve. This tradition is reflected during the *J'arakaylootzee Soorp Badarak* on the Eve of the Armenian Christmas (January 5th).

For many Christians the Christmas tree still retains the symbolism of the Paradise tree. The tree reminds us of the tree in Eden by which Adam and Eve were overcome and which thrust them into sin. But more importantly, the tree reminds us of the tree by which our sin was overcome, namely the tree upon which Christ Jesus was crucified. For example, Paul writes in Galatians 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (quoting Deut. 21:23). And Peter writes, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." Therefore, the Christmas tree is a wonderful symbol and reminder of our salvation and forgiveness through Jesus Christ!

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Happy New Year and Merry Christmas!

In the coming new year, may God bestow His blessings on you, shine the light of His love into your home and grant health and happiness to you and your loved ones.

May the joyous announcement of Christ's birth resound in our hearts throughout the coming year!