

**SPECIAL POINTS
OF INTEREST:**

- **Cultural Diversity in celebrating the season**
- **Evangelism in our Hispanic territory**
- **Sunset Calendar and Offering Schedule**



Put Christ Back Into Christmas

Ron Aguilera,
President



Christmas is almost upon us. The year 2019 is almost at a close. As I reflect on the season and experience the hustle and bustle of the season, it seems to me that most of the world has forgotten what Christmas is all about. Our culture has taken Christ out of CHRISTmas and made it X-mas. As I was thinking about this, I came upon this old story that reminds us that Jesus is not dead, but alive and well, and available to all who call on His name.

You would never expect a Christmas story to emerge from the violence and hatred of a Nazi concentration camp. Yet the birth of Christ and His eventual sacrificial death for all mankind take on a new meaning after reading the story of Max Kolbe.

A few years ago, my wife and I visited the concentration camp at Auschwitz, Germany. When I was there, I bought a book and in it was the story of Max Kolbe. It said that on February 17, 1941, German secret police, the Gestapo, imprisoned Max and

took him to Auschwitz.

In those days, the rule at Auschwitz was that ten innocent prisoners must die for every one prisoner who escaped. Then it happened at the end of July 1941, during a roll call the escape of a prisoner was noted, and it was decided that ten of Max's fellow prisoners had to die. The sentence? Death by starvation.

Among the ten who had been selected, one cried out loud, "Have mercy! I have a wife and children." It was then that Max stepped forward and offered himself to replace this head of a family and go with the other nine to the "hunger bunker." The commandant, surprised by the offer, agreed. So, Max went, and with the others endured hunger and exhaustion for two full weeks. Then, they gave him a deadly injection. He died on August 14. Prisoner 16670 was dead, but the man for whom he sacrificed himself lived. No doubt each August 14 was a time of reflection and

thankfulness toward the one who died for him.

Christ's blood was shed for you and for me on Calvary's cross. He died that we might live. That is what CHRISTmas is all about. He is the reason for the season. I invite you to take time this holiday season to reflect, rejoice, and be thankful for all Jesus has done for you and to share this Good News with others!

This issue is designed for memories! Memories of Christmas, the warmth, the closeness, and the celebration of Christ's birth. As a church we are provided an open opportunity to share God's love with a receptive audience at this time of year. How will you share Christmas this season?



Christmas, the Day to Go Out or Stay In?



Seoul S. Korea. Young people enjoying a Christmas holiday in Myeong-dong fashion district

*“...Thank Jesus,
who came to earth
to save us....”*



When and how did Christmas start in Korea? On December 24, 1886, "The Independence Newspaper" published Korea's first-ever article about Christmas called, 'Tomorrow is the Birthday of Jesus Christ.' In October, the following year, the first Presbyterian and Methodist Churches were established in Korea. A Christmas Communion service for Koreans was held by Presbyterian Missionary, Underwood, on December 25. Another missionary, Appenzeller, prepared Christmas events for the children and handed out gifts in socks to students at Baejae School. Yet another missionary, Scranton, built a Christmas tree for the Ewha Girls' School, and dressed himself up as Santa Claus. He was the first Santa Claus in Korea. This was the first occurrence of Christmas in Korea, and it was shared in connection with Christian missionaries.

But Christmas in Korea began to gradually deviate from the Christian purpose of celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Since the 1920s, as "Modern Girl" and "Modern Boy" have led Western cultural imports, Christmas began to develop with Seoul's commercial and urban culture. On December 25, 1936, the "Daily News" criticized the commercialization of Christmas. In an article titled, "Christmas, No Longer a Christian Culture, But a Tool for Commercials."

Christmas was designated as a national holiday by the United States Army Military Government after Korea's independence in 1945. And since the end of the Korean War in the 1950s, Christmas has been regarded by young people as a day of pleasure. Newspapers reported that in the 1960s, there were no open rooms in hotels by Christmas time. Later, when the curfew regulation was lifted in 1981, young people enjoyed their night culture intensely. In addition, as commercialism developed along with a yearning for Western culture, Christmas in Korea became a festival for young people to enjoy.

To celebrate our first Christmas in America my family went out to eat on Christmas Eve. But the view of downtown on Christmas Eve was so different than what I expected. The streets were quiet, and only a few people were on the streets. We tried to go to a good restaurant to have our Christmas Eve dinner, but none of the restaurants were open. All the shops and restaurants on the street were closed. I was amazed. On Christmas Eve in Korea the streets were full of colorful lights and people going out to enjoy Christmas. All the restaurants were packed. I remember my family coming home from the dark streets of downtown. It was so different from what I imagined of an American Christmas. I didn't know what the American Christmas culture was like. I had no idea that every family spent their Christmas at home in America.

We may differ in our cultures as to how to celebrate Christmas, but what's really



important is that Christmas is the day to celebrate and thank Jesus, who came to the earth to save us. It's a day to stay at home in the United States, and in Korea, it's a day to go out, but Christmas will always be a day to spend more time with Jesus.

By Pastor Joshua
Sang-Gyu Seo
Chicago Unity Church



Christmas in the Serbian Tradition

The birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated in the Serbian tradition on January 7 according to the Julian calendar.

In preparation for Christmas, many Orthodox Christians begin fasting 40 days before Christmas by eating no meat, dairy products, or eggs. Christmas in Serbia is a family holiday, and the three Sundays before Christmas are dedicated to celebrating members of the family: fathers, mothers, and children.

On the morning of Christmas Eve, Serbs go searching for a “Badnjak,” an oak tree branch with golden leaves. These oak branches are placed in front of the threshold until that evening. Before the family dinner on Christmas Eve, the men bring “Badnjak” straw into the house. To make the home resemble the stable where Jesus was born, the men scatter the straw across the floor, while the mothers and children follow them, making clucking sounds which symbolizes Christ’s wish to gather all people “as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.”

After the straw is scattered around the house, the family burns a part of the “Badnjak” in the house in a wood stove or fireplace, or in the back garden. The fire symbolizes the warmth that the three wise men brought to the stable where Jesus was born.

After the fire is lit, the family gathers around the dinner table, usually eating fish, beans, potatoes, and fruits. After dinner, family members leave home to go to church.

In front of churches, the “Badnjak” is burned in a huge fire at midnight. Church bells at dawn mark the advent of Christmas Day.



Serbs use the traditional festive greeting of “Christ is born, happy Christmas” for all three days of Christmas. The appropriate response is, “Truly, He is born.”

The highlight of the day is Christmas lunch. The family shares a special homemade loaf of bread with a coin baked inside, called the “Cesnica.”



Before the meal, the family breaks the bread into pieces, and each person starts to search for a coin in his or her slice. Good luck for the coming year is granted to whoever finds the coin. A prayer follows and only then can the rich lunch start.



The Christmas celebration continues on the second day by families visiting their neighbors or relatives and on the third day when the straw is hung in bundles on fruit trees to ensure a fertile year.

Seventh-day Adventists in Serbia believe that the birth of Christ is celebrated in spirit, and they do not bind it to a date since the day of Christ’s birth was not recorded in Scripture or in history. Adventists believe that today, regardless of the date, the true meaning of Christmas and the essence of Christ’s mission have been forgotten and lost, but forms and traditions are given attention.

The sin that has become inherent in the inhabitants of this planet has altered the nature and system of relationships on earth. There is nothing left but selfish human hearts that lives only for themselves.

God is love, and only love can awaken love. To know God means to love Him. God spoke to this world of His love through nature, symbols, and images, through patriarchs and prophets. But humanity had to receive lessons in human language, for God to reveal Himself to sinful creatures He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world.

It is vital for us to understand that God has an unspeakable gift, **Immanuel, God with us**, who has been offered for life, not just for one day.

That is why Seventh-day Adventists in Serbia celebrate Christmas every day.

“...an unspeakable gift, Immanuel, God With Us, .. Has been offered for life...”

By Pastor John Piroski
Elmhurst Church



Maligayang Pasko!



“...Can we be thankful, grateful, and content with what we have?”

Maligayang Pasko! That is how you wish each other a Merry Christmas in Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines. And truly, Christmastime in the Philippines is merry! The Philippines actually celebrates the longest Christmas season in the world. Some start the celebration as early as September! They call their Christmas Season the “ber” months (from **September** to **December**), which means they celebrate four months of Christmas!

“Noche Buena,” what we call Christmas Eve, is a big tradition in the Philippines. Many families will come together around midnight on Christmas Eve to eat a simple meal and to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Because the Philippines is largely Catholic, you will see churches packed on that evening.

Children in the Philippines love the Christmas season. It means family (lots of family), gifts, and food (lots of food)! Oh, don’t let me forget to tell you about the singing! You may not know this, but Filipinos love to sing!



Makati, Philippines - Two men singing Christmas songs at an outdoor market a few days before Christmas.

Caroling is not a dying art in the Philippines! They love to go caroling to the homes of friends and neighbors, and there will always be doors open and food to share afterward.

There is such a special feeling in the Philippines during Christmas time. It is no wonder that traveling to the Philippines in December is the most expensive time of the year to visit there.

Even though I am a Filipino-American, born and raised in the US, I appreciate the culture that my parents and my extended family brought here. It is one centered around church and family, and it has deeply influenced me as a person, a father, and a pastor.

There is one major piece of the Filipino culture that I would like to share with you as a personal reflection. I mentioned that Christmas-time is a time of giving. But let me tell you, the Philippines, in general, is an impoverished country. What would they have to give? I have observed with my own eyes that *they give what they have, and they give with so much joy.*

As an American, this is tough for me to practice and even to understand, I admit. But I also appreciate it. Because I have seen kids at Christmas who don’t get anything, and they are still so happy. I believe it’s because they don’t have any expectations, are surrounded by community, and have learned to be content with what they have.

What a profound lesson that was for me; one that I believe I can share with my fellow Americans who are bombarded with the commercialization of Christmas. Through the years, I have seen the Christmas season become a stressful and lonely time to so many, even in the church.

There is an old saying that goes like this – “Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have.” I believe that’s the mindset of some of the poorest people I’ve seen in places like Ghana, Cuba, Mexico, and the Philippines. They don’t have much, but they are content. Philippians 4:19 is for us this Christmas! Being content is so counter-cultural. We want more and more, especially this time of year.

Can I share a challenge with you this Christmas? Can we be thankful, grateful, and content with what we have?

My favorite author says this, *“In order to be happy, we must strive to attain to that character which Christ exhibited. One marked peculiarity of Christ was His self-denial and benevolence. He came not to seek His own. He went about doing good, and this was His meat and drink. We may, by following the example of the Savior, be in holy communion with Him; and by daily seeking to imitate His character and follow His example, we shall be a blessing to the world and shall secure for ourselves contentment here and an eternal reward hereafter.”* (Testimonies, Vol 4, 227)

So... I want to share a challenge with us this Christmas – to be content. And I want to extend the warmth of the Filipino spirit this Christmas. Maligayang Pasko!

By Pastor Glenn Aguirre
Hinsdale Fil-Am Church



El Nacimiento De Jesús

Cuando pensamos en el nacimiento de Jesús nuestra mente inmediatamente se traslada a la época de Navidad. El nacimiento de Cristo se debe celebrar cada día del año pues si Jesús no hubiese nacido todo el plan de salvación quedaría afectado. Sin embargo, es la Navidad donde tenemos una oportunidad especial de resaltar la historia del nacimiento de Jesús.

En la forma más simple les diré que la Navidad para mí es época de unidad. Es el tiempo en que nos juntamos con nuestros hijos, amigos y vecinos a celebrar el nacimiento de Jesús. Es un tiempo en el que las personas se saludan en la calle aún sin conocerse. Es el tiempo en que todas las diferencias se ponen a un lado.

En otras palabras, el nacimiento de Cristo trae unidad. Esto es cierto para un hispano como yo y estoy seguro que para muchos otros también.

Navidad es luces, música, comida, convivios, y alegría, aunque a veces mezclada con tristeza al pensar en los que ya no están para disfrutar de ese tiempo juntos.

Recuerdo los maravillosos momentos que de niño pasé junto a mis padres celebrando el Nacimiento de Jesús y estos me producen alegría. El nacimiento de Jesús, su vida, muerte y resurrección, representa la esperanza de volver a encontrarme con mis padres que descansan hasta el retorno del niño Jesús, ahora glorificado como Rey y Señor.

La navidad es época de unidad matrimonial y familiar que nos

permite hacer proyectos juntos como armar el árbol de navidad, el pesebre, cocinar nuestra comida favorita para la celebración familiar.



La Navidad me permite reencontrarme con mis hijos y compartir momentos de calidad como hicieron mis padres conmigo.

Como pastor he visto como El nacimiento de Cristo también trae unidad a la iglesia y mas en el plano espiritual pues Cristo es quien nos



Ramos family from left to right: Migdalice, Miguel Jr., Karolina, Brenda and Miguel

une a todos como una familia. También es una excelente época para evangelismo donde podemos como iglesia hablarles a otros de Jesús pues las puertas de muchos se abren y los corazones están receptivos al tema.

Es una excelente época de regalar ropa, comida y otras bendiciones a

los menos afortunados, en símbolo del regalo que de Dios nos hace en Jesús.

Puedo recordar como íbamos con el club de conquistadores a compartir regalos sencillos a los niños en el hospital o en orfanatorios para contarles y cantarles sobre la historia del Nacimiento de Jesús.

Como amigo es un momento de contactar a todos aquellos que hemos sido separados por la distancia y el tiempo. Es una ocasión perfecta para unirnos y celebrar exaltando a Jesús.

La celebración de el nacimiento de Jesús es una época maravillosa para glorificar a Dios, una oportunidad para hablar a otros de Jesús, un tiempo para recordar y celebrar las bendiciones que Dios nos da. Es un momento para unirnos, cantar, comer, reír y porque no también para llorar juntos.

Es una época para poner en practica lo que dice Juan 17:21 y estar en unidad "para que el mundo crea" que ese niño que fue enviado para salvarme hoy, lo puede hacer si deajo que nazca y crezca en mi corazón.

Al celebrarlo de esta forma daremos un ejemplo al mundo de el verdadero significado del evento y muchos más estarán dispuestos a abrirle su corazón al maestro quien intercede por nosotros y pronto volverá a buscarnos.

Escrito Por

Pastor Miguel Ramos Ramos

*Hispanic churches of:
Cicero, Little Village, Pilsen and South*

*"La
celebración
de el
nacimiento
de Jesús es
una época
maravillosa
para
glorificar a
Dios.."*

EVANGELISMO METROPOLITANO 2019

SIEMBRA

- Entrenamientos
- Vigilias de oración
- Grupos pequeños
- Instructores Bíblicos voluntarios

En esta etapa el enfoque fue tener la iglesia lista para trabajar con sus amigos. Cada miembro de iglesia orando por 3 amigos. Cada grupo pequeño invitando a 5 amigos. Cada instructor Bíblico voluntario estudiando la biblia con 2 nuevas personas. Cada Iglesia Reunida en oración una vez al mes pidiendo por el derramamiento del Espíritu Santo.

COSECHA

Del 2 al 9 de noviembre cada iglesia hispana de la Conferencia de Illinois recibirá un evangelista invitado para una campaña de cosecha. Cada miembro de iglesia trayendo a su amigo, cada grupo pequeño llevando a sus miembros y cada instructor bíblico acompañado de sus estudiantes.

COSECHA FINAL

Del 7 al 17 de diciembre será la vez de la caravana de evangelismo que va visitar todos los distritos hispanos. El Pr. Alejandro Bullón, evangelista internacional estará con un equipo evangelístico visitando las iglesias para cosechar lo que aún esta por ser cosechado. Cada noche visitando una iglesia.

FESTIVAL DE GANANCIA DE ALMAS

14 de Diciembre en la Iglesia de Hinsdale será el cierre de los esfuerzos evangelísticos con el festival de ganancia de almas. Todas las iglesias hispanas estarán juntas para alabar a Dios, celebrar las victorias dadas por Dios y tener los últimos bautismos.

METROPOLITAN HISPANIC EVANGELISM 2019

SOWING

During the preparation or "sowing" stage (through November 1) of our 2019 Hispanic Evangelism Program, our goal is for

- Each member to pray for 3 friends
- Each small group to invite 5 friends
- Each Bible instructor starts new studies with 2 people
- Each church to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

HARVEST

From November 2 to 9, a guest speaker will present in each of the Hispanic Churches for a Harvest Campaign. This is a culmination of the sowing period: each member is encouraged to bring a friend; each small group attend with their members; and each Bible instructor to accompany their students.

FINAL HARVEST

During the final harvest, December 7-17, the evangelistic team, with international evangelist, Pastor Alejandro Bullon, will visit one of the Hispanic District churches each evening.

SOUL WINNING FESTIVAL

The soul winning festival on December 14 at the Hinsdale SDA Church will be the exciting close to this evangelistic effort. All of the Hispanic churches will be together for praise, celebration, and baptisms.

Sunset Calendar

Feel free to cut this handy calendar out so that you can use it for a quick reference all year through!

The offering calendar had not been received from the North American Division by the time of going to print, but will be sent to church treasurers as soon as it is available and will be downloadable in various formats from the Illinois Conference website:

www.ilcsda.org/stewardship



Seventh-day
Adventist[®] Church 2020 Sunset Calendar*
ILLINOIS CONFERENCE

	Date	Chicago	Rockford	Moline
January	4	4:33	4:37	4:45
	11	4:40	4:45	4:53
	18	4:48	4:53	5:00
	25	4:57	5:01	5:09
February	1	5:05	5:10	5:18
	8	5:14	5:20	5:27
	15	5:23	5:29	5:35
	22	5:32	5:37	5:44
	29	5:40	5:46	5:52
March	7	5:49	5:54	6:00
	14	6:57	7:03	7:08
	21	7:05	7:11	7:16
	28	7:12	7:18	7:24
April	4	7:20	7:26	7:31
	11	7:28	7:34	7:39
	18	7:35	7:42	7:46
	25	7:43	7:50	7:54
May	2	7:51	7:58	8:02
	9	7:58	8:05	8:09
	16	8:06	8:12	8:16
	23	8:12	8:19	8:23
	30	8:18	8:25	8:28
June	6	8:23	8:30	8:33
	13	8:27	8:34	8:37
	20	8:29	8:36	8:39
	27	8:29	8:37	8:40
July	4	8:28	8:30	8:39
	11	8:25	8:34	8:36
	18	8:21	8:36	8:31
	25	8:15	8:37	8:25
August	1	8:07	8:14	8:18
	8	7:59	8:05	8:09
	15	7:49	7:55	8:00
	22	7:38	7:45	7:49
	29	7:27	7:33	7:38
September	5	7:15	7:21	7:26
	12	7:03	7:09	7:14
	19	6:51	6:57	7:02
	26	6:39	6:44	6:50
October	3	6:27	6:32	6:38
	10	6:15	6:20	6:27
	17	6:04	6:09	6:16
	24	5:54	5:59	6:06
	31	5:44	5:49	5:56
November	7	4:36	4:41	4:48
	14	4:29	4:34	4:42
	21	4:24	4:29	4:37
	28	4:21	4:25	4:33
December	5	4:19	4:24	4:32
	12	4:19	4:24	4:32
	19	4:22	4:26	4:35
	26	4:26	4:30	4:39

* <https://sunrise-sunset.org>

"So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God."
Hebrews 4:9

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Seventh-day Adventist® Church

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE

Presenting Jesus Irresistibly!

Wishing you all God's blessings!

THE WAY OF *Peace*:
OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD,
FALSEHOOD WITH TRUTH, AND
HATRED WITH LOVE.

MAY YOU AND YOUR FAMILY
ENJOY A PEACEFUL

Christmas SEASON, AND A
CHRIST-FILLED NEW YEAR
OVERFLOWING WITH GRACE.



P E A C E
O N E A R T H
P A X S U R L A
T E R R E M I P H A
З Е М Ъ И П А Z E N L A
T I E R R A F R I E D E N A U F
E R D E N P A Z N A T E R R A
P O K Ó J N A Z I E M I V R E D E O P
A A R D E C H E S I A P A C E S U L L A
T E R R A M I R N A Z E M L J I
K A P A Y A P A A N S A B U O N G D A I G D I G
H Ò A B Ì N H T R È N T R Á I D Á T
D A M A I D I B U M I
地球の平和 MIP HA ZEMLE पृथ्वी पर शांति
B É K E A F Ö L D Ö N P A C E P E P Ą M Ą N T M Í R N A
Z E M I M I P H A Z E M L I L A P Ě S O U T Ě A 지구의 평화
Y E R Y Ū Z Ū N D E B A R I Ş O L S U N A M A N I D U N I A N I
F R E D P Ą J O R D E N שלום על פני האדמה

The Illinois Conference has a wide diversity of membership, and we believe that this represents an incredible strength. The message of this picture — Peace on Earth — is shared in some of the languages represented in Illinois Conference congregations.

English, French, Serbian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Afrikaans, Italian, Croatian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Karen, Indonesian, Japanese, Russian, Hindi, Hungarian, Romanian, Czechoslovakian, Ukrainian, Haitian, Korean, Turkish, Swahili, Swedish, Hebrew.