

# The Connection

## Messages of Hope



A Weekly Online Newsletter: Edition 816

January 1, 2025

## “How is the birth of Jesus celebrated in...Asia and Australia?”

The celebration of the birth of Jesus, commonly known as Christmas, is observed in various ways across Asia and Australia, with each region incorporating its own cultural, religious, and local traditions. Here's a look at how Christmas is celebrated in these areas:

### Asia

Asia is a vast and diverse continent, so Christmas celebrations vary widely across countries. While Christmas is not widely observed in all Asian countries, in some places where Christianity is practiced or has a significant presence, it is celebrated with joy, albeit with local cultural adaptations.

#### Philippines

- **One of the most Christmas-spirited countries in Asia**, the Philippines celebrates Christmas as early as September with decorations like "parols" (star-shaped lanterns).
- **Simbang Gabi** (Night Mass) is a major religious tradition in the lead-up to Christmas, often culminating on Christmas Eve with a festive family meal.
- **Noche Buena**, the Christmas Eve feast, includes traditional Filipino dishes like lechon (roast pig), bibingka (rice cakes), and puto bumbong (purple rice cakes).
- Carols, parades, and community events are common, and the Christmas season lasts well into the New Year.

#### South Korea

- Although Christmas is a national holiday, South Korea has a relatively small Christian population, but the country celebrates the occasion with enthusiasm, blending it with secular festivities.
- In major cities like Seoul, Christmas lights, decorations, and displays are common. Malls, hotels, and public spaces are beautifully decorated.
- **Christmas Eve** is often the most significant day, with many couples treating it like Valentine's Day, going on dates or exchanging gifts.
- For Christians, attending **church services** is an important part of the day, and churches hold special events and concerts.

#### India

- Christmas in India is celebrated mostly by the Christian communities, especially in states like Goa, Kerala, and parts of the Northeast. However, the spirit of Christmas is often felt throughout the country.
- Churches are decorated with **nativity scenes**, and many communities organize **Midnight Mass** services on Christmas Eve.
- **Christmas sweets** like plum cake, kulkuls, and marzipan are common in Christian households, and families also prepare traditional dishes depending on their region.

- In larger cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore, there are festive events, public Christmas trees, and displays. Non-Christians may also partake in the holiday cheer, with shopping centers and businesses joining in the celebration.

#### Japan

- Christmas is largely a secular holiday in Japan, and while the majority of the population isn't Christian, the occasion has been embraced as a time for romance, family gatherings, and festive cheer.
- **Christmas Eve** is often seen as the more important celebration, with couples going out for romantic dinners and exchanging gifts.
- **KFC** has become a Christmas tradition in Japan, with many people ordering special Christmas meals from the fast food chain.
- Christmas lights and decorations are a common sight in urban areas, and department stores often have elaborate displays. Christmas cakes (often decorated with strawberries and whipped cream) are a staple treat.

#### China

- Christmas is not a public holiday in mainland China, but it is increasingly celebrated, especially in larger cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, where it is more of a commercial and secular event.
- In some regions, like Hong Kong, Christmas has strong Christian roots, and people attend church services, sing carols, and decorate their homes.
- **Shopping malls** are often decked out with elaborate Christmas trees and decorations, and businesses may give out promotions and sales during the holiday season.
- In some areas, **Christmas Eve dinners** and family gatherings are held, but Christmas Day is not as widely observed.

#### Other Countries

- In countries like **Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia**, Christmas is celebrated by Christian minorities, and while public celebrations and decorations are not as widespread, churches hold special services.
- **Indonesia** (especially in regions like Bali and Jakarta) has a sizeable Christian population, and Christmas traditions include church services, family meals, and sharing gifts.

(Australia on page 3)

**HOPE Calendar**  
**Wednesday, January 1**  
**HAPPY NEW YEAR**  
**NO SERVICES TONIGHT**

**Thursday, January 2**  
 Worship Team Rehearsal @ 7:00 p.m.

**Sunday, January 5**  
 Worship Team Run Through  
 @ 8:00 a.m.  
**Worship @ 9:30 a.m.**

**Wednesday, January 8, 2025**  
 Wednesday Night Supper @ 6pm  
 Study & Prayer @ 7:00 p.m.

**Thursday, January 9, 2025**  
 Worship Team Rehearsal @ 7:00 p.m.

**Helping Hands for  
 JANUARY 5, 2024**

**ProPresenter**  
***Dianne Reinoso***  
**Soundboard**

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**Live Streaming**  
***Franklin Johnston***  
**Communion**  
***Lynn Joyner***  
**Greeter**  
***(TBA)***

**Scripture Text and Sermon  
 This Coming Sunday**

**Spiritual Disciplines for the  
 Christian Life#1:  
 "Discipline Yourself for  
 Godliness"  
 1 Timothy 4:7-9**

| Prophecies Revealed.... | O.T.       | N.T. |
|-------------------------|------------|------|
| Dec 30                  | John 1:51  |      |
| Dec 31                  | Gen 28:14  |      |
| Jan 1                   | Luke 3:34  |      |
| Jan 2                   | Gen 49:10  |      |
| Jan 3                   | Luke 2:1-7 |      |
| Jan 4                   | Gen 49:10  |      |

**GROW**

**Women of HOPE**  
**Saturdays at 10a.m. at HOPE**

**1/11/25 - 10AM**  
**"Bring pics of your younger self...  
 what would you tell her today..."**

**Wednesday Night  
 HAPPY NEW YEAR  
 NO SERVICES  
 TONIGHT**

**"Food of the Month"**  
 for the Raleigh Dream Center  
 Food Pantry  
**Canned Meats and Meals**  
 We have a collection bin in the foyer

**HOPE Meal Ministry**  
 Take a meal from the freezer if  
 needed for you or someone else.

**SERVE**

**TLC Devotion**  
 4th Wednesday each month  
**@ 11:00 a.m.**  
 5124 Departure Dr # 101, Raleigh

**HOPE CHURCH RALEIGH**

**17TH ANNIVERSARY  
 CELEBRATION**

**SUNDAY  
 JANUARY 12, 2025  
 COVERED DISH  
 (Please use sign-up sheet)**

Prayer Requests:  
 Joan Rollinson, Ron Clifton, Will Floyd's Fiancé's  
 Mother: Jennifer, Jerry & Alice Kinard, Gene &  
 Becky Hale, Dianne Reinoso, Janice  
 Worthington, Cindy(Elizabeth), Dennis Grady,  
 Nancy Hutchens (Positive Cancer), Barbara(81)  
 Stroke, Joey(18) Crohn's, Ebo (Glioblastoma  
 #3/4)-family has 4 children, Possible Colligate  
 Ministry, Hurricane Relief Efforts, Youth Ministry,  
 Kathy Jo and her family, Donna Williams &  
 Family, Peggy Karpenske, Claudia in Idaho  
 (Kathy H), Patty Moyer's son Brandon, Dave &  
 Dot Geil, Steve Duckett, Corbin Broome, The  
 Mallory family, Carol & Colin (Kathy H), Loretta  
 (Sandi U), Joan Summers, Shelley Riggleman,  
 Jordan (Lynn J.), Ellie Tappan, Carlyle and  
 Cynthia Franklin, our Military, Police, Fire, and  
 EMS, Missionaries, our Nation, and the world.

**UPCOMING WOMEN OF  
 HOPE GATHERING AT THE  
 CHURCH**  
**1/25/25 - 10AM**  
**"Responding to Anger -  
 Learning to Answer Gently"**

Please remember that your  
**Stewardship Commitment Cards** for  
 2025 are due  
**AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**  
 Please prayerfully consider your  
 financial and time  
 support for  
**Hope Church Raleigh.**

**God's work is not for a few, but for all  
 who would follow Jesus.**

**HOPE Church Raleigh**  
**An Evangelical Presbyterian Church**  
 4911 Green Rd  
 Raleigh, NC 27616  
 919-508-6827  
**Worship Time: 9:30 AM**

**www.HopeChurchRaleigh.org**  
**www.facebook.com/HOPEChurchRaleigh**  
**Twitter: @HopeChRaleigh**  
**YouTube.com (type "HOPE Church Raleigh"  
 in the search box)**

## Australia

Australia, being a predominantly Christian country, celebrates Christmas in much the same way as many Western nations, though the holiday comes with its own unique twists due to its summer season and outdoor lifestyle.

### Summer Celebrations

- Christmas falls during the Australian summer (December 25), which means Christmas celebrations often revolve around outdoor activities such as **beach outings, barbecues, and picnics**. It's common for people to celebrate Christmas Day outdoors with family and friends, enjoying **cold seafood, ham, and pavlova** (a meringue-based dessert).

### Christmas Traditions

- Many Australians, like in other Western countries, have **Christmas trees, decorations, and nativity scenes**. **Christmas carols** are sung, and cities like Sydney and Melbourne have elaborate displays and Christmas markets.
- A popular tradition is "**Carols by Candlelight**" events, where people gather in parks or outdoor venues to sing carols by candlelight. The largest of these events takes place in Melbourne, and it is broadcast live across the country.

### Festive Food

- Traditional Christmas meals often include **barbecues, seafood (like prawns and lobster), cold meats, and salads**. **Christmas pudding and fruit mince pies** are popular desserts, though some Australians also enjoy lighter, summer-friendly treats.
- On Christmas Eve, many Australians attend a **Midnight Mass**, and Christmas morning is usually spent opening presents and enjoying a family breakfast.

### Public Celebrations

- **Christmas parades and festivals** are common, especially in cities like Sydney, where **Christmas on the Rocks** or **Vivid Sydney** bring festive lights, decorations, and community events.
- **Boxing Day (December 26)** is also a public holiday, with many Australians participating in **sports events** (like the Boxing Day Test cricket match) and continuing family gatherings.

## Summary

In both Asia and Australia, Christmas is celebrated with a mix of religious and secular traditions. In Asia, the observances are influenced by local cultures and the Christian population, ranging from religious services and Christmas markets in the Philippines and South Korea to secular festivities and decorations in Japan and China. Australia, with its warm summer Christmas, embraces outdoor festivities, barbecues, beach outings, and traditional Christmas meals, while also keeping many Western traditions like caroling, Christmas trees, and family gatherings.

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