

December 2020

Northern Pines News

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Celebrating December

**Universal Human Rights
Month**

Bingo's Birthday Month

Lighting of the Tree
December 2nd

Bingo's Birthday Party
December 9th

Hanukkah
December 10th–18th

Gingerbread House Contest
December 11th

Free Shipping Day
December 17th

Christmas
December 25th

Kwanzaa
December 26th–January 1st

New Year's Eve
December 31st

“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Never has there been a darker year that I can remember than 2020. Social injustice, rioting, COVID-19, political division, isolation, loneliness, mental health decline, the list could go on and on. The world right now and even more specifically the United States of America, the world in which we live, is a very dark place. It seems in a lot of ways that the world we once knew is a distant memory. And yet it was in a world of darkness not too dissimilar from ours that a great light entered our atmosphere... ..1st century Palestine was a world full of social injustice, murder, power, greed, political division, crippling taxation, this list could also go on and on. This dark world seemed to find and squash any goodness or light that dared enter it, and yet, in a little town called Bethlehem, our Savior was born into an ordinary family and into a world that had no room for him. As we enter this season of Advent in the Christian calendar, which in simple terms is a season of preparation and expectation of Christ's coming (past and future), I extend an invitation to you and your family to take time together to reflect upon and notice things that are good and beautiful in and around you, things that bring light to our dark world. These things can be very simple things such as a smile, an encouraging word, holding the door for your neighbor, an intentional act of kindness for a stranger, naming things you are thankful for as a family or taking time together to pray and enjoy one another's company. Whatever leads your hearts towards light and goodness this Advent season, I invite you in that direction. I have personally witnessed all the beautiful things listed above in our homes from residents and staff to one another this year. Christ's life and light continues to shine very bright in the hearts and lives of our residents and staff. I echo the words of St. John concerning the light he saw in Christ, "In him there was life, and that life was a light for the people of the world. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:4-5 May we allow Christ's light to shine in our hearts this Advent season and be the light we wish to see more of in the world. On behalf of Baruch Senior Ministries, I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Chaplain Clint

A Tough Nut to Crack

December brings many beloved holiday traditions, but one soars above the rest. No, not flying reindeer, but the dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy. Tchaikovsky's classic ballet *The Nutcracker* has become a holiday staple all around the world, despite not mentioning the nativity story or Santa Claus.

It was not Tchaikovsky's idea to write *The Nutcracker*. After enjoying success with his ballet *The Sleeping Beauty* in 1890, Tchaikovsky was asked to compose a ballet for the Imperial Theatre. Tchaikovsky turned to his friend and collaborator Marius Pepita, who suggested they write a ballet based on the fairy tale *The Story of a Nutcracker*, by the French writer Alexandre Dumas. Dumas himself had "borrowed" the story from the German writer E.T.A. Hoffman, who wrote *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* in 1816. In the 1800s, nutcrackers were common decorations in German households, revered as symbols of good luck. While composing in France, Tchaikovsky discovered a new instrument, the *celesta*. He decided to feature its wonderful sound in his new ballet. Before the ballet premiered, a short concert of the musical suite was played in St. Petersburg. Every number was given an encore. Tchaikovsky knew the music was good, but he worried about the performance.

Tchaikovsky was right to worry. Critics did not like *The Nutcracker* when it premiered at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia, on December 18, 1892. One particularly harsh review read, "*The Nutcracker* cannot in any event be called a ballet." For decades, only the first half of the ballet, featuring the battle between the soldiers and the rat king, was performed. But in 1944, the San Francisco Ballet, led by William Christensen, staged the entire ballet, and it became an instant holiday hit. Nutcrackers suddenly became cherished holiday decorations. By the 1960s, dance companies all across America were performing *The Nutcracker* as an annual December tradition. For many children, *The Nutcracker* remains their first and best exposure to ballet and classical music.

December Birthdays

In astrology, those born between December 1–21 are the Archers of Sagittarius. The Archer's open mind, optimism, curiosity, and enthusiasm make them the travelers of the zodiac. They treasure freedom: freedom to roam, freedom of thought, and freedom to express themselves. Those born between December 22–31 are Capricorn's Goats. Goats are responsible masters of self-control. They are practical planners and leaders who value experience and expertise.

Richard Pryor (comedian) – December 1, 1940
Andy Williams (singer) – December 3, 1927
Kirk Douglas (actor) – December 9, 1916
Ada Lovelace (programmer) – December 10, 1815
Rita Moreno (actress) – December 11, 1931
Brad Pitt (actor) – December 18, 1963
Jane Fonda (actress) – December 21, 1937
Humphrey Bogart (actor) – December 25, 1899
Susan Butcher (musher) – December 26, 1954
LeBron James (athlete) – December 30, 1984

Thankful, Grateful & Blessed

How thankful, grateful & blessed we are to all have each other during these difficult times. To be able to still enjoy activities and be able to be with each other for Thanksgiving & Christmas is a blessing. Although we are not all family by blood we truly are a family at heart at Northern Pines. Hope everyone has a blessed holiday season and a healthy 2021!

