

Why I'm still holding onto Christmas

By [April Yamasaki](#)

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While others have been making—and maybe even already breaking—new year's resolutions or choosing their [one word](#) for 2014, I'm still holding onto Christmas. After all, it was only this Sunday at church that our magi finally arrived at the nativity scene in front of the sanctuary. At home, our nativity scene remained in place to mark [Epiphany](#) yesterday, and I might just leave it up a while longer.

It may well be that Jesus' birth was not actually at this time of year at all. The Gospel of Luke includes shepherds in the fields with their sheep ([Luke 2:8](#)), which would have been more likely in spring. And a rare meeting of Saturn and Jupiter, also in the spring, may have been the star sign observed by the magi.

We had a fascinating guest speaker Sunday (aka my husband, Gary, who is a New Testament scholar and teacher) who explained this in detail and has posted a simplified version [here](#). He suggested that he might even celebrate the birth of Jesus later in May, without all the hoopla that tends to surround Christmas in December. After his sermon, several people said they might join him!

And why not? Jesus is God-with-us always—in December, in May, and at any time of year, in times of celebration and in hardship. God in Jesus Christ comes to us at the traditional Christmas time and any time.

One of the most well-known Christmas carols is "Joy to the World," by Isaac Watts:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king!

But did you know that these words were not originally written for Christmas? They're based on Psalm 98 and are part of a collection of hymns that Watts wrote as an "imitation" of the psalms. In our church [hymnal](#), "Joy to the World" is not grouped together with "O Come All Ye Faithful" and other Christmas carols but appears in the

section "Proclaiming: Kingdom." They're words for Christmas and for the rest of the year too.

So for now I'm going to hold onto Christmas—not so much the nativity scene, which will eventually be packed away for next year, but continuing to celebrate Jesus as God-with-us, continuing to proclaim God's reign:

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns...
No more let sins and sorrows grow...
He rules the world with truth and grace...

Originally posted at [Yamasaki's blog](#)