

A week before Christmas in 1834, Charles Dickens published *A Christmas Carol* (in which he wrote that Scrooge required Cratchit to work, and that the US Congress met on Christmas Day). It was so popular that neither the churches nor the governments could not ignore the importance of Christmas celebrations.

In 1836, Alabama became the first state in the US to declare Christmas a legal holiday.

In 1837, T.H. Hervey's *The Book of Christmas* also became a best seller.

In 1860, American illustrator Thomas Nast borrowed from the European stories about Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of children, to create **Father Christmas (Santa Claus)**.

In 1907, Oklahoma became the last US state to declare Christmas a legal holiday. Year by year, countries all over the world started to recognize Christmas as the day for celebrating the birth of Jesus.

## **Have a merry Christmas**

Today, many of the pagan uses are reflected in Christmas. Jesus was born in March, yet his birth is celebrated on December 25, the time of solstice. The Christmas celebrations end the 12th day of Christmas (January 6), the same amount of days that the return of the sun was celebrated by ancient and Roman pagans. It thus is no surprise that Christian puritans – or even conservative Christians – often are upset that Christmas “is not as religious as it was meant to be,” forgetting that Christmas was not celebrated at all until fairly recently.

## **Quick Christmas facts**