

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 25, 2018 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 169 ~ 1 of 23



**Holiday
Trash Pick-Up**

Garbage pick-up will NOT be on Christmas Day instead pick-up will be the following day, Wednesday, December 26!!

Garbage WILL be picked up on New Year's Day, January 1st!!

Snow storm is coming!

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



Put our experienced team to work for you!

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Ford
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Homecare Services Caregivers
Flexible, part time positions available in the Groton area. Home Care Services is looking for friendly dependable people to provide care and companionship for elderly and disabled people in their homes. You will be assisting our clients with personal care needs, meal preparations, light housekeeping, errands and other tasks. If you have a passion for helping others and need a flexible schedule, please call our office at (605) 225-1076 or 1-800-899-2578. (1218.0101)

A Face Almost Too Tight to Smile

By Richard P. Holm, MD

For years I cared for a lovely woman with scleroderma. It all started with Raynaud's phenomenon a condition causing her fingers, after an exposure to cold, to become pale-white then blue or red and painful. Raynaud's phenomenon occurs in about four percent of the population, is usually not associated with any other condition, but sometimes goes with

rheumatoid arthritis, lupus or, in this case, scleroderma. My patient also experienced progressively tight and shiny skin on her hands, then chest, then everywhere. She had tiny red spider vein spots (telangiectasia), heartburn, weight loss, weakness and puffy joints. Over the years her fingers became scarred and quite immobile with always worsening sores on the tips. Through it all, this wonderful lady had a very positive attitude and always seemed to have a smile on her face, although, near the end, the skin of her face became so tight that smiling became a challenge.

Yearly, about three in 100,000 middle-aged U.S. adults develop scleroderma (or when full-blown called systemic sclerosis). Normally, after a cut or a sore develops and in order to heal the wound, our bodies trigger both the immune system (to fight off invasion of bacteria, fungi and viruses) and special repair cells (to close off the wound with collagen and scar tissue). Once the damage has been repaired, extra collagen production usually stops, but not with scleroderma. For some unknown reason, scarring continues uncontrolled. At this time, treatment for this very puzzling auto-immune condition is restricted to treatment of symptoms; no cure for scleroderma exists.

We think that inheritance, hormones, certain infections and long-term exposure to pesticides, silica dust or polyvinyl chloride all might have something to do with the cause, but we really don't know. We also don't know why four times as many women get it as men; why it can involve just a spot or a sword shape skin area and never progress; why it may or may not occur with Raynaud's phenomenon, involvement of the esophagus and smaller parts of the skin but doesn't progress; and why, in some unfortunate cases, it progresses everywhere, like in my patient.

Similar to many other autoimmune conditions, scleroderma is one where the immune system, for some undefined reason, runs amok, mistaking normal tissue as a foreign invader. Scientists and physicians are on the hunt to learn first why scleroderma happens and then how to stop the process.

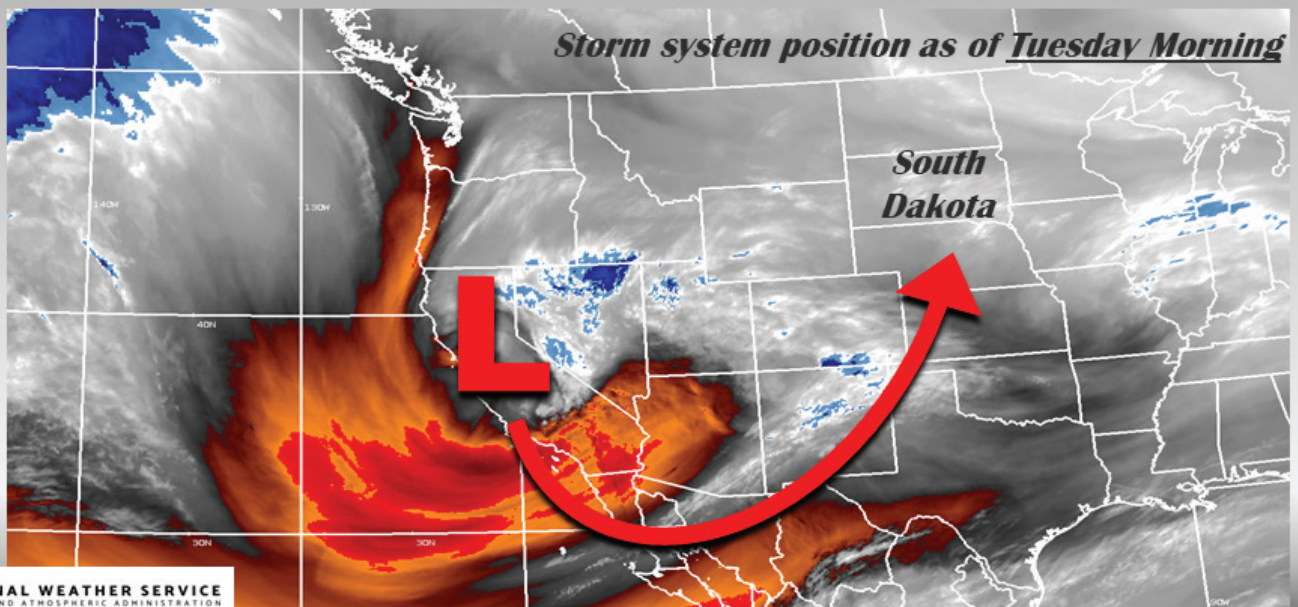
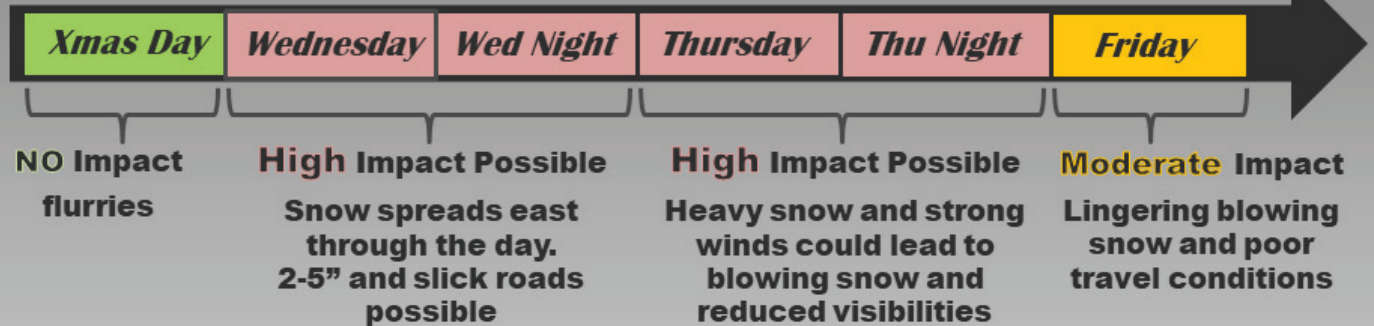
If we understood more about scleroderma, we would all find it easier to smile.

Watch On Call with the Prairie Doc® most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central on SDPTV and follow the Prairie Doc® on Facebook and YouTube for free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library.

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Preliminary Timeline: Post-Christmas Winter Storm



Published on: 12/25/2018 at 2:48AM

WINTER STORM WATCH

...WINTER STORM WATCH IN EFFECT FROM WEDNESDAY MORNING THROUGH LATE THURSDAY NIGHT...

* WHAT...Heavy snow with total accumulations of 6 to 14 inches possible. Some light freezing rain/drizzle could bring light ice accumulations in the Watertown and surrounding areas Wednesday afternoon and evening. North winds will increase on Thursday to 20 to 35 mph with blizzard conditions possible across the area into Thursday night.

* WHERE...Portions of central, north central and northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota.

* WHEN...From Wednesday morning through late Thursday night.

* ADDITIONAL DETAILS...Travel could be very difficult to impossible. Areas of blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute.

A Winter Storm Watch means there is potential for significant snow, sleet or ice accumulations that may impact travel. Continue to monitor the latest forecasts.

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Partly To Mostly Cloudy - Flurries

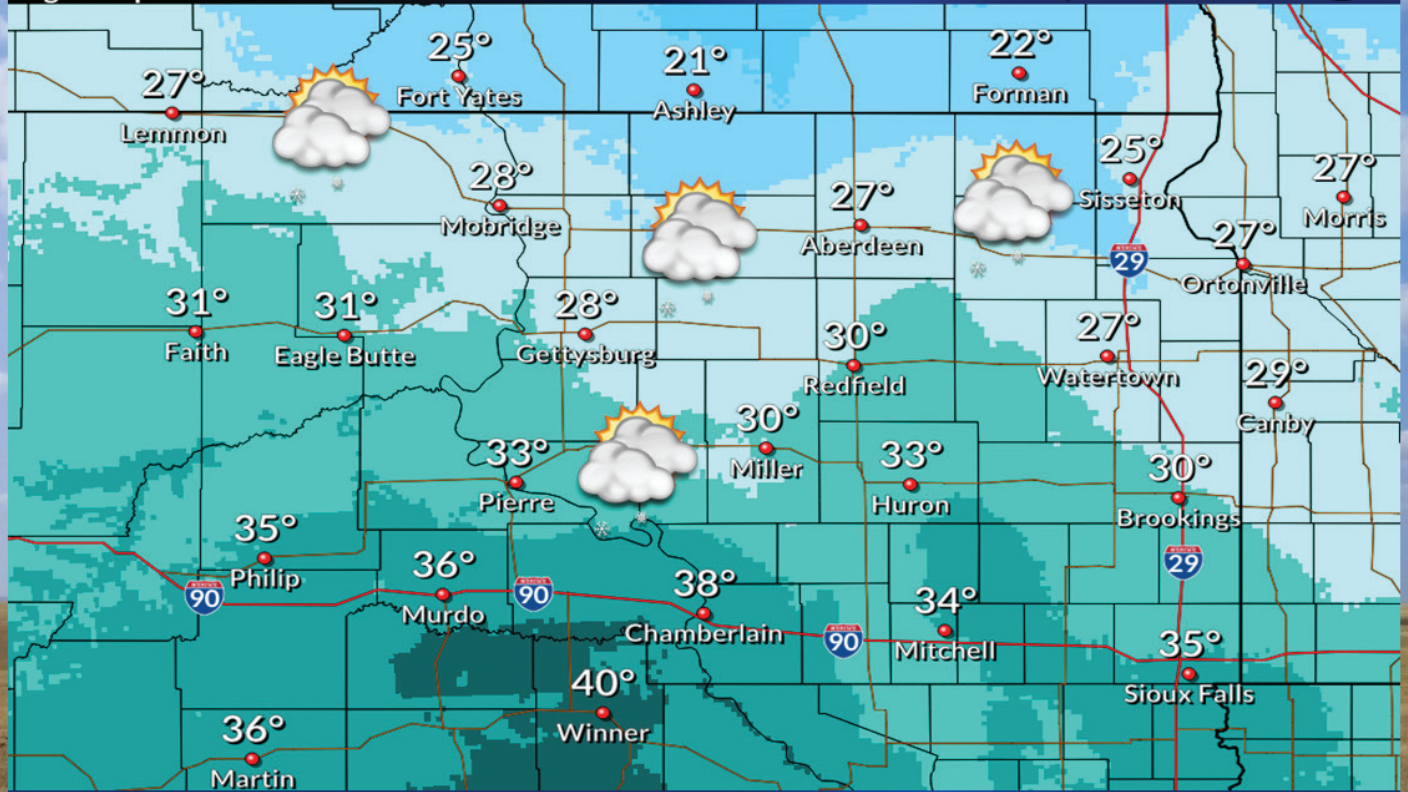
The Last Good Travel Day This Week

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD



High Temperatures

Issued Dec 25, 2018 2:56 AM CST



f t NWSAberdeen

weather.gov/abr

Published on: 12/25/2018 at 3:09AM

Aside from clouds, flurries, and some morning fog - today appears to be the best day to travel for the next few days!

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Today in Weather History

December 25, 1983: Winds of 20 to 30 mph, with occasionally higher gusts, combined with very light falling snow and loose surface snow to cause near-blizzard conditions and dangerously low wind chills in most of South Dakota, as well as in southwest and west central Minnesota, from the early evening of the 23rd into Christmas morning. Visibilities were frequently near zero and four- to five-foot drifts closed the vast majority of roads, making travel impossible. Hundreds of motorists became stranded during the evenings of December 23rd and 24th. In Minnesota, many holiday travelers heading west from Minneapolis and St. Paul drove to central Minnesota before conditions became too severe to continue. Winds and severe cold in the western part of Minnesota caused several power outages as well as the loss of livestock.

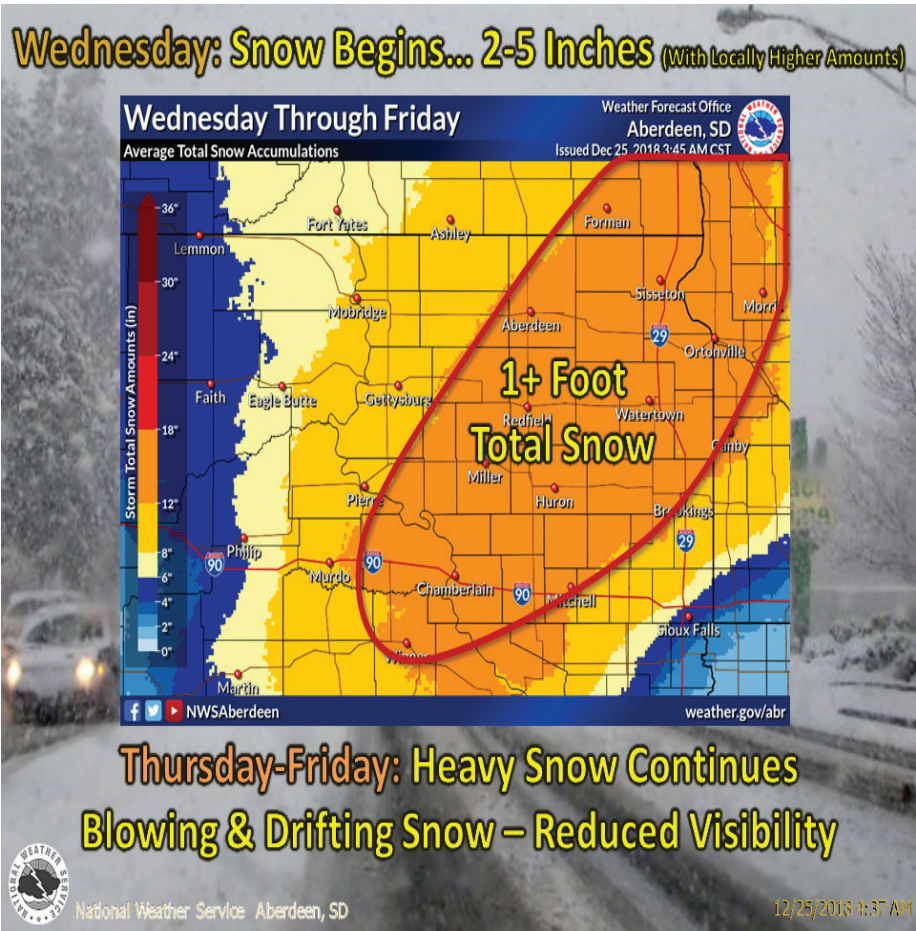
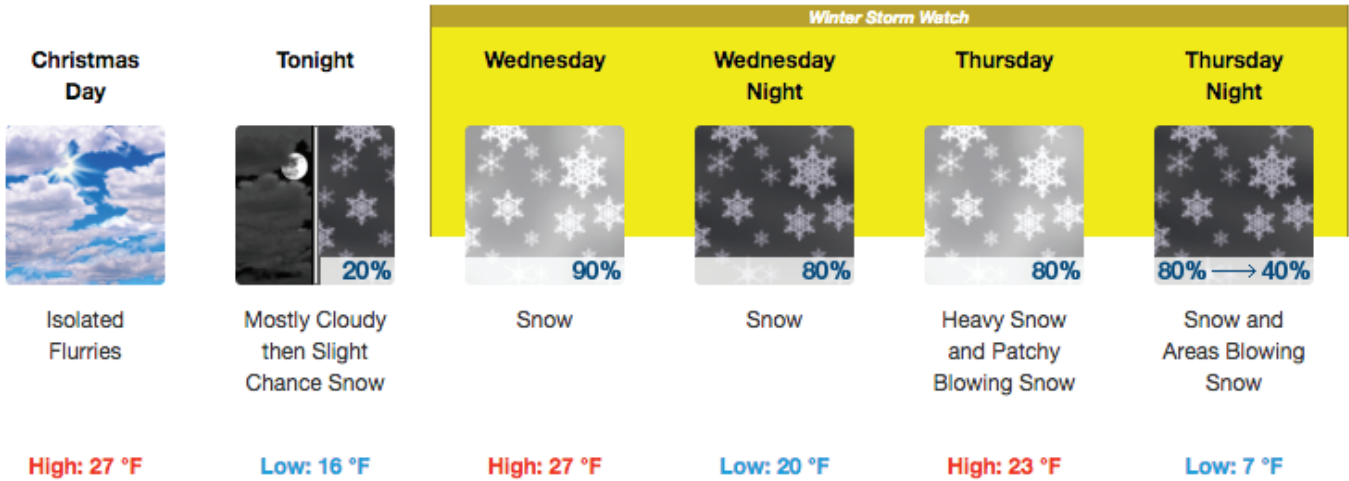
In South Dakota, at least 70 vehicles were stalled at one point over a 14-mile stretch of Interstate 90 between Kennebec and Reliance in Lyman County. The Pierre Airport in Hughes County was closed twice on the 23rd as visibility was reduced to zero. Most flights were canceled at Sioux Falls Airport in Minnehaha County, stranding numerous holiday travelers. Sub-zero temperatures, combined with gusts of over 60 mph, produced wind chill indices in the 60 to 100 below zero range. Several cases of frostbite were reported, propane gas solidified, fuel jelled, and water pipes and tanks froze as a result of the extreme cold. In Minnehaha County at Wall Lake, electrical outages of 12 hours were experienced from power lines snapping as a result of the cold and winds.

December 25, 1776: Thomas Jefferson noted that the first winter snow fell on Dec. 20, but did not last on the ground one day. Temperatures dropped to 30 degree or colder on Christmas Day. That night, 22 inches of snow fell. From the 25th of December until March 6, 10 snows covered the ground and some of them were deep. The first rain came on the 9th of March. In Frederick County, two feet of snow was recorded.

December 25, 1987: Since 1894, Tucson, Arizona has seen snow on Christmas Day four times. The most recent event occurred in 1987 when Tucson saw 2.6 inches.

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Published on: 12/25/2018 at 4:38AM

We continue to track a storm that could bring over a foot of snow to parts of the Dakotas and western Minnesota. Initial onset of snow will be during the day Wednesday, with a short break before the next wave of heavy snow moves in Thursday. Snow will taper Friday, but Thursday and Friday will see strong winds, with blowing and drifting of snow, with poor visibility. Expect travel to be impacted Wednesday through Friday and make alternate plans if you can!

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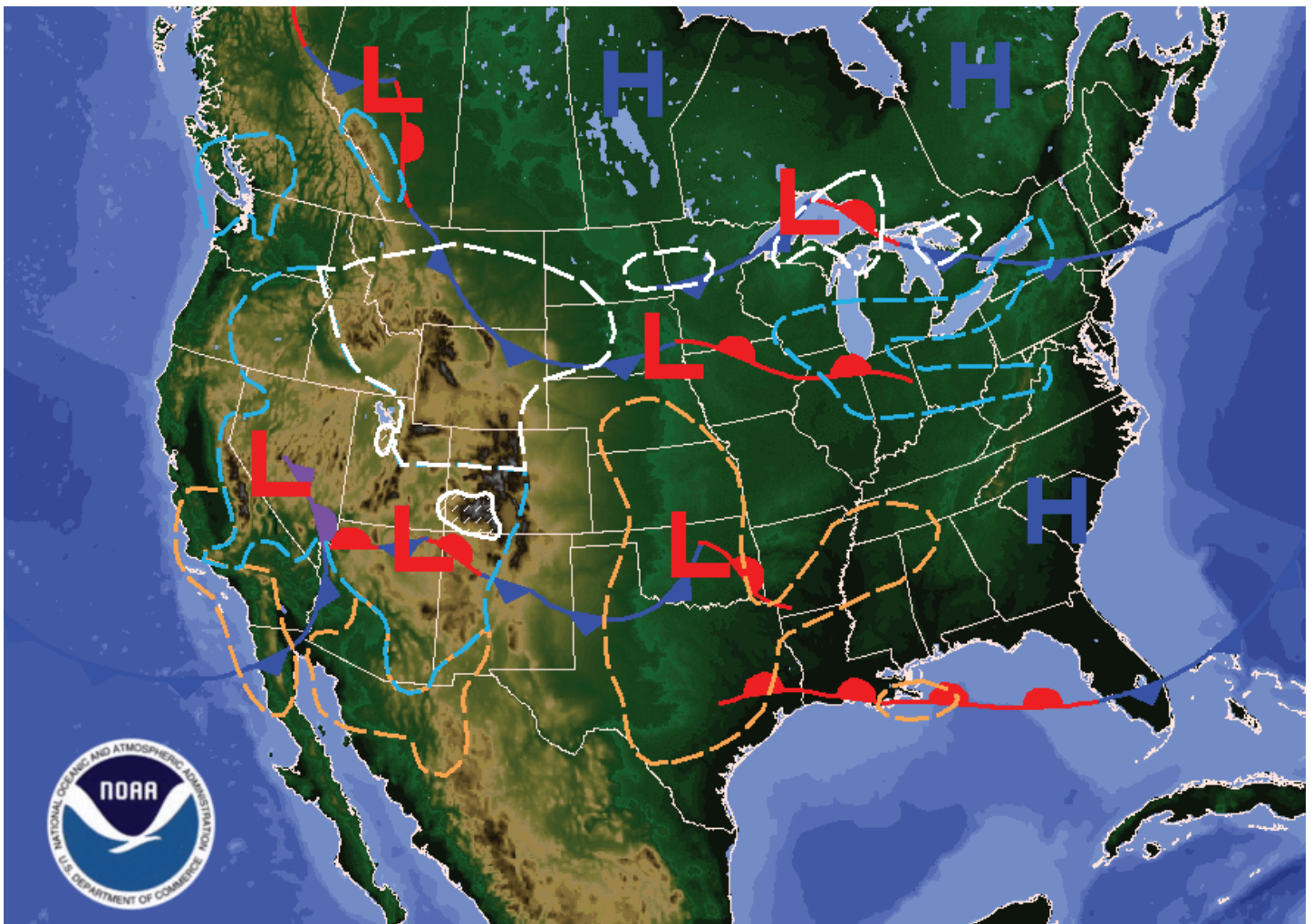
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 36 °F at 3:59 PM
Low Outside Temp: 13 °F at 12:00 AM
High Gust: 14 mph at 10:45 AM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 56° in 1907
Record Low: -25° in 1996
Average High: 23°F
Average Low: 3°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.39
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.59
Precip Year to Date: 15.81
Sunset Tonight: 4:56 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Tue, Dec 25, 2018, issued 4:36 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow
Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)
Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)
Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)
Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)



THE BIRTH OF JESUS

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. Don't be afraid! he said. I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior, yes, the Messiah, the Lord has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of other the armies of heaven praising God and saying,

Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.

Luke 2:6-16
New Living Translation

2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- Nov./Dec./Jan./Feb./Mar. Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/27/2019 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 4/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 5/4/2019 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 5/27/2019 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program at the Cemetery, Lunch to follow at the American Legion (Memorial Day)
- Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/15/2019 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/14/2019 Summer Fest
- 9/7/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/01/2018 Olive Grove Golf Course 2018 Holiday Party
- Best Ball Golf Tourney
- SDSU Golf Tourney
- Sunflower Golf Tourney
- Santa Claus Day
- Fireman's Stag
- Tour of Homes
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

News from the Associated Press

Black Hills Corp. balances renewable, traditional energy

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota utility says its move to establish a massive wind farm in Wyoming aims to help its largest consumers fulfill their sustainability goals but doesn't signify a shift from traditional energy production.

Black Hills Corp. is seeking regulatory approval for a proposed \$57 million, 40-megawatt wind farm west of Cheyenne.

Nick Gardner, vice president of electric operations at Black Hills Corp., told the Rapid City Journal that large companies and governmental agencies are demanding more renewable energy, but that the company must balance customers' expectations with shareholder needs.

"As we move into the future and we continue to monitor the developments and technology available, when it comes to renewables, whether it's wind or solar, we'll certainly be engaged in that but at this point in time we're committed to the resources that we have and own in Gillette, Wyoming," said Gardner.

The energy produced by the wind farm will be divided 50-50 between consumers in Wyoming and South Dakota. Companies in South Dakota have committed to using about 65 percent of that state's 20 megawatts by the end of September 2020.

Renewable Ready Service Tariff is an additional fee any company using the energy will have on their bill, if the company's filings are successful. It would be a fixed rate charge per kilowatt hour of energy used. Gardner said 40 megawatts is equal to the amount of power used by about 20,000 homes for an entire year.

Corriedale Wind Energy Project is the official name for the wind farm near Cheyenne. It is the primary renewable energy project currently serving South Dakotan customers. Gardner said rebuilding and modernizing the utility's distribution system was a near-term priority because it is close to completing a \$70 million rebuild of its transmission lines extending to Eagle, Nebraska. The company is also considering building a solar farm near Edgemont.

Information from: Rapid City Journal, <http://www.rapidcityjournal.com>

Japan stocks plunge, other Asia markets fall after US losses

By **JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Japanese stocks plunged Tuesday and other Asian markets declined following heavy Wall Street losses triggered by President Donald Trump's criticism of the U.S. central bank.

The Nikkei 225 fell by an unusually wide margin of 5 percent to 19,155.14. The Shanghai Composite Index ended off 0.9 percent at 2,504.82 after being down as much as 2.3 percent at midday. Benchmarks in Thailand and Taiwan also declined.

Markets in Europe, Hong Kong, Australia and South Korea were closed for Christmas.

Wall Street indexes fell more than 2 percent on Monday after Trump said on Twitter the Federal Reserve was the U.S. economy's "only problem." Efforts by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to calm investor fears only seemed to make matters worse.

U.S. stocks are track for their worst December since 1931 during the Great Depression.

Shanghai is down almost 25 percent this year. Tokyo, Hong Kong and other markets are on track to end 2018 down more than 10 percent.

Markets have been roiled by concerns about a slowing global economy, the U.S.-Chinese tariff battle and another interest rate increase by the Fed.

Trump's Monday morning tweet heightened fears about the economy being destabilized by a president who wants control over the Fed. Its board members are nominated by the president but make decisions independently of the White House. The board's chairman, Jerome Powell, was nominated by Trump last year.

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"The only problem our economy has is the Fed," the president said on Twitter. "They don't have a feel for the Market, they don't understand necessary Trade Wars or Strong Dollars or even Democrat Shutdowns over Borders. The Fed is like a powerful golfer who can't score because he has no touch — he can't putt!"

The Standard & Poor's 500 index slid 2.7 percent. The benchmark index is down 19.8 percent from its peak on Sept. 20, close to the 20 percent drop that would officially mean the end of the longest bull market for stocks in modern history — a run of nearly 10 years.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average sank 2.9 percent while the Nasdaq skidded 2.2 percent.

On Sunday, Mnuchin made a round of calls to the heads of the six largest U.S. banks, but the move only raised new concerns about the economy.

Most economists expect U.S. economic growth to slow in 2019, not slide into a full-blown recession. But the president has voiced his anger over the Fed's decision to raise its key short-term rate four times in 2018. That is intended to prevent the economy from overheating.

Technology stocks, health care companies and banks took some of the heaviest losses in Monday's sell-off. Wells Fargo slid 3.4 percent, Microsoft 4.2 percent and Johnson & Johnson 4.1 percent.

U.S. markets reopen Wednesday.

In energy markets, Brent crude, used to price international oils, lost 9 cents to \$50.68 per barrel in London. The contract plummeted \$3.33 on Monday to close at \$50.77.

In currency trading, the dollar declined to 110.28 yen from Monday's 110.45 yen. The euro was little-changed at \$1.1407.

Trump: 'Nothing new on the shutdown' on Day 3 of closure

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump met Monday with his Homeland Security secretary and other officials to discuss border security issues as a partial government shutdown over his U.S.-Mexico border wall entered Christmas without a clear resolution in sight.

Though both sides have moved on the money, they aren't budging on the wall. The White House insisted Trump will reject any deal that does not include money for a wall or fence; Democrats held firm in their opposition to a wall or other physical barrier.

"Nothing new. Nothing new on the shutdown. Nothing new. Except we need border security," Trump told reporters at the White House as he answered telephone calls from children who want to know when Santa will get to their homes.

In a joint statement, the Democratic leaders of Congress, Sen. Chuck Schumer and Rep. Nancy Pelosi, said that as long as Trump keeps listening to the House Freedom Caucus and others on the right flank, there is no easy resolution to the impasse.

"It's Christmas Eve and President Trump is plunging the country into chaos," they said, pointing to problems beyond the shutdown, including the plunging stock market and the president's firing of his defense secretary. "The president wanted the shutdown, but he seems not to know how to get himself out of it."

The White House presented a counteroffer over the weekend to Schumer, budget director Mick Mulvaney said Sunday. Mulvaney would only say the offer was between Trump's \$5.7 billion request and \$1.3 billion Democrats have offered.

A Democratic aide granted anonymity to discuss the private talks confirmed the White House offered \$2.5 billion - an initial \$2.1 billion plus \$400 million Democrats called a "slush fund" for the president's other immigration priorities.

Mulvaney said he was awaiting a response from Schumer. Schumer's office said the parties remained "very far apart."

Trump chimed in from the White House, where he has been cooped up since the shutdown began early Saturday.

"I am all alone (poor me) in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come back and make a deal on desperately needed Border Security," he tweeted. "At some point the Democrats not wanting to make

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a deal will cost our Country more money than the Border Wall we are all talking about. Crazy!"

Trump put off plans to head to his Florida estate for Christmas. His wife, first lady Melania Trump, returned from Florida to spend the holiday with him.

The president's border security meeting Monday afternoon included Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and other department officials, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said.

Senate negotiators continued talks behind the scenes with Democrats and Republicans. The House and Senate briefly gavelled into session on Christmas Eve before closing again with no further action.

In their statement, Pelosi and Schumer said "different people from the same White House are saying different things about what the president would accept or not accept to end his Trump Shutdown, making it impossible to know where they stand at any given moment."

Trump blamed Democrats for the stalemate, tweeting Monday that "Virtually every Democrat we are dealing with today strongly supported a Border Wall or Fence. It was only when I made it an important part of my campaign, because people and drugs were pouring into our Country unchecked, that they turned against it. Desperately needed!"

However, an AP Fact Check found that U.S. arrests on the Mexican border jumped 78 percent in November from a year earlier to the highest level in Trump's presidency. Increased arrests indicate that more people are trying to cross the border illegally.

Several Cabinet departments and agencies have been closed since Saturday after their funding lapsed. Hundreds of thousands of federal workers across the country were affected by the closure, which expected to last at least through Thursday, when the House and Senate meet again.

Mulvaney predicted the shutdown could stretch into January, when Democrats are set to control the House.

Trump excused federal employees from work on Monday and Christmas is a federal holiday, meaning Wednesday is the first day the public could begin to feel the effects of lost government services, Mulvaney said.

The routines of about 800,000 federal employees, meanwhile, were about to be disrupted.

More than half of those employees deemed essential, including U.S. Secret Service agents and Transportation Security Administration agents, must work without pay, though retroactive pay is expected. Another 380,000 were to be furloughed, meaning they will not report to work but would also be paid later. Legislation ensuring workers receive back pay was expected to clear Congress.

Trump promised during the campaign to build a border wall and make Mexico to pay for it. Mexico has refused.

Progress toward funding the wall has been slow and Trump sees the final days of the GOP's complete control of Congress as his last chance to force the issue. But some Republicans also oppose building a wall.

Follow Darlene Superville and Lisa Mascaro on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap> and <http://www.twitter.com/LisaMascaro>

Mattis' permanent replacement likely to face close scrutiny

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The departure of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis in a week will thrust President Donald Trump's largely unknown choice for acting Pentagon chief into the military hot seat and shift attention to the search for a permanent replacement who will probably face sharp Capitol Hill questioning about the administration's murky foreign policy.

Trump tweeted Sunday that Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan will take over as acting head of the department on Jan. 1, elevating a former Boeing Co. senior executive with little experience in international affairs. Shanahan worked for Boeing for more than three decades and was a senior vice president when he became Pentagon deputy in July 2017. And his time on the job has been mainly focused on the business side of the department and its budget in excess of \$700 billion.

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A White House official said that in the new year Trump wants to focus on streamlining purchases at the Pentagon, an issue on which Shanahan has already been working. The official asked not to be identified publicly discussing personnel matters.

But there are looming policy questions about the wars in Syria and Afghanistan, including critical decisions about how the Pentagon will carry out Trump's order last week to pull all 2,000 U.S. troops out of Syria, and withdraw up to half of the 14,000 American forces in Afghanistan.

Both decisions trigger massive logistical challenges to get the troops and equipment out of both warzones safely, without further inflaming U.S. allies or boosting the aspirations of the enemy.

A key unanswered question is what the administration will do for the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, which have gotten weapons and training to fight Islamic State insurgents. The SDF will face almost certain attacks from Turkey, the Syrian government and IS once the U.S. leaves, and officials don't know if the Syrian rebels will have to return the weapons to the U.S.

Shanahan hasn't been to either warzone, and officials say he's likely to depend heavily on Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Dunford is scheduled to leave the job and retire Sept. 30, and Trump has already said he is nominating Gen. Mark Milley, the Army chief, as the next chairman.

Dunford, who was in Afghanistan on Monday with a USO show, has been telling troops that so far the mission in Afghanistan has not changed, said his spokesman, Air Force Col. Pat Ryder. Ryder said Dunford "told them that they're American soldiers, they have a mission to do, and to just get after it."

Mattis' departure signals an acrimonious end to a tense relationship between him and Trump that had eroded in recent months. Mattis hand-delivered a scathing resignation letter to the president on Thursday in protest over Trump's decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria.

In the letter, Mattis made clear that he didn't see eye to eye with a president who has expressed disdain for NATO. That drew a critical tweet from Trump on Monday.

"We are substantially subsidizing the Militaries of many VERY rich countries all over the world, while at the same time these countries take total advantage of the U.S., and our TAXPAYERS, on Trade," Trump tweeted. "General Mattis did not see this as a problem. I DO, and it is being fixed!"

The reaction to Mattis' departure, however, sparked shock and dismay on Capitol Hill. U.S. officials said the fallout angered Trump and fueled his decision to accelerate the Mattis departure.

U.S. officials said they don't know if Shanahan will be Trump's nominee to replace Mattis. During a White House lunch with conservative lawmakers Saturday, Trump discussed his options. They were "not all military," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who was there.

Trump's acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, was asked whether Trump wanted a Pentagon leader willing to challenge him or someone in lockstep with his views, and he said "a little bit of both."

Names that are quietly beginning to surface include some of the civilian leaders of the military services such as Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson and Army Secretary Mark Esper, an acknowledgement that someone who has already undergone Senate confirmation is considered a safer bet.

Shanahan did not serve in the military. His father was in the Army and deployed to Vietnam.

He earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Washington, then a master's in mechanical engineering as well as an MBA from the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In addition to work in Boeing's commercial airplanes programs, Shanahan was vice president and general manager of Boeing Missile Defense Systems and of Boeing Rotorcraft Systems. In a March 2016 report, the Puget Sound Business Journal called Shanahan a Boeing "fix-it" man who was central to getting the 787 Dreamliner on track after production problems in the program's early years.

Although Monday was a federal holiday and the Pentagon was fairly empty, Mattis was at his desk. Shanahan had already left for the holiday, but he has canceled a planned vacation and is expected back in Washington on Tuesday night. His offices were staffed Monday.

Associated Press writers Robert Burns, Darlene Superville and Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report. How major US stock indexes fared Monday

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By The Associated Press

Stocks plunged Monday, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average falling 653 points following President Trump's tweet attacking the Federal Reserve and its independence.

Technology companies, health care stocks and banks took some of the heaviest losses in the broad sell-off. Trading volume was low as the market closed early ahead of the Christmas holiday shutdown.

On Monday:

The S&P 500 index slid 65.52 points, or 2.7 percent, to 2,351.10.

The Dow sank 653.17 points, or 2.9 percent, to 21,792.20.

The Nasdaq skidded 140.08 points, or 2.2 percent, to 6,192.92.

The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks gave up 25.16 points, or 2 percent, to 1,266.92.

For the year:

The S&P 500 is down 322.51 points, or 12.1 percent.

The Dow is down 2,927.02 points, or 11.8 percent.

The Nasdaq is down 710.47 points, or 10.3 percent.

The Russell 2000 is down 268.59 points, or 17.5 percent.

Trump assails Fed as the 'only problem our economy has'

By JOSH BOAK, AP Economics Writer

President Donald Trump lashed out at the Federal Reserve on Monday after administration officials spent the weekend trying to assure the public and financial markets that Jerome Powell's job as Fed chairman was safe.

"The only problem our economy has is the Fed," the president tweeted Monday. "They don't have a feel for the Market, they don't understand necessary Trade Wars or Strong Dollars or even Democrat Shutdowns over Borders. The Fed is like a powerful golfer who can't score because he has no touch — he can't putt!"

On Wall Street, stocks had already been down but intensified their fall after Trump's tweet. Markets are facing their worst month in a decade over fears about a U.S. trade war with China, a slowing global economy and chaos in the Trump White House. By the close of a holiday-shortened trading session Monday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average had sunk 653 points for the day — 2.9 percent.

Trump's latest tweet attacking the Fed was met with concern that any effort to diminish Powell or remove him as chairman could destabilize the economy.

"He is seeking open warfare on Christmas Eve," said Peter Conti-Brown, a financial historian at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. "We've never seen anything like this full-blown and full-frontal assault. This is a disaster for the Fed, a disaster for the president and a disaster for the economy."

The president has expressed frustration over the Fed's decision to raise its key short-term rate four times this year. Those moves are intended to prevent the economy from overheating at a time of brisk growth and an unemployment rate near a half-century low.

At a news conference last week, Powell explained that the rate hikes were evidence of the economy's strength. But Trump sees the increases — which lead to higher borrowing costs for consumers and businesses — as an economic and political threat.

The president's attacks are widely seen as an intrusion on the political independence of the Fed, which exists to determine the flow of money based off economic data on employment and inflation.

Fed independence has long been among the bedrocks of the U.S. financial markets. It ensures that central bankers can make politically unpopular decisions, such as fighting high inflation in the 1980s or rescuing banks after the 2008 financial crisis.

Sen. Richard Shelby of Alabama, a senior Republican on the Banking Committee, has cautioned against removing Powell.

"I'd be very careful doing that," Shelby told reporters Saturday at the Capitol. "The Federal Reserve is set up to be independent."

Stocks did decline after Powell announced this year's fourth rate hike on Wednesday. But the sell-off ap-

peared to reflect concerns that the Fed might be moving too fast in its plans to raise rates and to shrink its vast portfolio of bonds given an economic slowdown that is expected in 2019.

Fed officials voted unanimously to increase rates last week. Among those voting with Powell were three other board members who were chosen by Trump: Richard Clarida, Randal Quarles and Michelle Bowman.

The president expressed his displeasure Monday with the Fed after Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin had tweeted on Saturday that Powell's job was safe. Mnuchin also tweeted on Sunday that he had checked with the heads of the six largest U.S. banks to ensure that they had enough liquidity to operate in a stock market that has tumbled sharply since October.

"My sense is the Mnuchin tweets don't tell us much about the economy, but they provide unusual insight into the chaos inside the White House," said Joseph Brusuelas, chief economist at the consultancy RSM. "Rather than instilling confidence, it created confusion and raised more questions than it answered. Foremost among those is, how safe is the job of Jay Powell as chairman of the Federal Reserve?"

AP chief congressional correspondent Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.

Christmas stalemate in Washington over border wall, shutdown

By **DARLENE SUPERVILLE** and **LISA MASCARO**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Both sides in the fight over President Donald Trump's border wall with Mexico have given a little on the money. What they can't seem to agree on is what it should be spent on.

And until Trump, who wants a wall, and Democrats, who oppose it, can come to an agreement, portions of the U.S. government will stay closed.

Christmas marked the fourth day of the partial U.S. government shutdown with no end in sight.

Most lawmakers fled the capital over the weekend to be with their families. Trump remained at the White House after scrapping plans to spend Christmas at his Florida estate.

"Nothing new. Nothing new on the shutdown. Nothing new, except we need border security," he told reporters Monday at the White House while participating in the annual tradition of answering telephone calls from children anxious to know when Santa will get to their homes.

In a joint statement, the Democratic leaders of Congress, Sen. Chuck Schumer and Rep. Nancy Pelosi, blamed Trump for the stalemate and for "plunging the country into chaos." They pointed to problems beyond the shutdown, including heavy losses on Wall Street and Trump's decision to fire his defense secretary.

"The president wanted the shutdown, but he seems not to know how to get himself out of it," they said in the statement.

Trump had said he'd be "proud" to shut down the government in a fight over the wall, but now blames Democrats for refusing to give him the votes needed to approve a House-passed bill that includes the \$5.7 billion he wants for the wall.

The White House presented a counteroffer over the weekend to Schumer that is between Trump's \$5.7 billion price tag and the \$1.3 billion Democrats have offered, said budget director Mick Mulvaney. He did not elaborate, but a Democratic aide granted anonymity to discuss the private talks said the White House offered \$2.5 billion — an initial \$2.1 billion plus \$400 million Democrats called a "slush fund" for the president's other immigration priorities.

Mulvaney said he was waiting for Schumer's response. Schumer's office said the parties remained "very far apart."

Trump chimed in from the White House, where he has relentlessly tweeted on a variety of issues while being cooped up in the mansion since Saturday, when the shutdown began. He tweeted at one point about feeling lonely.

"I am all alone (poor me) in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come back and make a deal on desperately needed Border Security," he tweeted. "At some point the Democrats not wanting to make a deal will cost our Country more money than the Border Wall we are all talking about. Crazy!"

Trump met Monday on border security with Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and other

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department officials. Senate negotiators continued talks behind the scenes with Democrats and Republicans. The House and Senate briefly gavelled into session on Christmas Eve before quickly closing again with no further action.

Several Cabinet departments and agencies have been closed since Saturday after their funding lapsed, and Mulvaney warned the shutdown could stretch into January, when Democrats are set to take back control the House.

Trump excused federal employees from work on Monday and Christmas is a federal holiday, meaning the public could begin feeling the shutdown's effects on Wednesday. Some 800,000 federal workers must either work without pay for the time being, or stay home and wait to be paid later.

Trump promised to make Mexico pay for the border wall. Mexico has refused.

Follow Darlene Superville and Lisa Mascaro on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap> and <http://www.twitter.com/LisaMascaro>

Prayers for tsunami victims replace Christmas celebrations

By NINIEK KARMINI, Associated Press

SUMUR, Indonesia (AP) — Christmas celebrations traditionally filled with laughter and uplifting music were replaced by somber prayers for tsunami victims in an area hit without warning following a volcanic eruption, leaving more than 420 people dead and thousands homeless in disaster-prone Indonesia.

Pastor Markus Taekz said Tuesday that his Rahmat Pentecostal Church in the hard-hit area of Carita did not celebrate with joyous songs this year. Instead, only about 100 people showed up for the Christmas Eve service, which usually brings in double that number. Many congregation members had already left the area for the capital, Jakarta, or other locations away from the disaster zone.

"This is an unusual situation because we have a very bad disaster that killed hundreds of our sisters and brothers in Banten," Taekz said, referring to the province on Java island. "So our celebration is full of grief."

Church leaders called on Christians across Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, to pray for victims of the tsunami.

The death toll climbed to 429 on Tuesday, with more than 1,400 people injured and at least 128 missing after the tsunami in the Sunda Strait slammed into parts of western Java and southern Sumatra islands on Saturday night, said Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman for Indonesia's Disaster Mitigation Agency.

He said more than 16,000 people were displaced and that there was an urgent need for heavy equipment in the Sumur subdistrict, a remote area near Ujung Kulon National Park that experienced heavy damage. Some villages there have been cut off due to damaged roads and bridges, making it difficult to supply aid and reach people who may be injured or trapped.

Unlike most tsunamis, this time there was no large earthquake to warn people to run to higher ground before the waves arrived. Instead, an eruption of the infamous volcanic island Anak Krakatau appears to have triggered a landslide on its slope, which then sent displaced seawater racing.

Residents remained jittery and fearful of lingering near the coast. In at least two separate areas Tuesday, panicked residents ran toward higher ground because they believed another tsunami was coming.

People in Sumur remained stunned by how quickly the tsunami hit without warning. Sumur beach, located just a few kilometers (miles) from the tourist island of Umang near Java's western tip, is popular for snorkeling and other water activities. The tsunami clobbered the area, ripping houses from their foundations and bulldozing concrete buildings.

Scientists have said the tsunami's waves were recorded in several places at about 1 meter (3.3 feet) high, but villagers in Sumur insisted they were more than 3 meters (10 feet) high there. They said a soaring white wall of water roared forward at high speeds, ripping trees out of the ground by their roots.

Tati Hayati, a housewife, said she was enjoying the full moon near the beach with 10 other people when the disaster hit.

"There was no sign of a tsunami when we were at the beach. The sea didn't recede," she recalled. "It

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was calm and bright with the full moon.”

When she spotted high, fast-moving waves launching toward the shore, she ran to her car and managed to get inside. But she couldn't outrun it. The car was struck by three waves, breaking out the back window and filling the vehicle with gushing water.

“We were locked inside. The car was swaying in the waves and we thought we would all die,” she said. “We almost could not breathe and I almost gave up when I groped the key in the water and managed to open the door, and the water began to recede. We got out of the car and ran to safety.”

Military troops, government personnel and volunteers continued searching along debris-strewn beaches. Yellow, orange and black body bags were laid out where victims were found, and weeping relatives identified the dead. Many searched for missing loved ones at hospital morgues.

The lead singer of the Indonesian pop band Seventeen located the body of his dead wife after posting emotional posts on social media, vowing that he would not leave her. The group was performing at a beach hotel when the tsunami was captured on video smashing into their stage, killing several band members and crew.

The waves followed an eruption and apparent landslide on Anak Krakatau, or “Child of Krakatoa,” a volcanic island that formed in the early part of the 20th century near the site of the cataclysmic 1883 eruption of Krakatoa.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo, who faces what promises to be a tough re-election campaign next year, vowed to have all tsunami-detection equipment replaced or repaired.

Nugroho, the disaster agency spokesman, acknowledged on Twitter that the country's network of detection buoys had been out of order since 2012 because of vandalism and budget shortfalls.

But the head of Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency, Dwikorita Karnawati, said the tsunami was likely caused by Krakatau's volcanic activity and so could not have been picked up by the agency's sensors, which monitor conventional earthquakes responsible for more than 90 percent of Indonesia's tsunamis.

Karnawati said the tsunami was probably caused by the collapse of a big section of the volcano's slope. Anak Krakatau has been erupting since June and did so again 24 minutes before the tsunami, the geophysics agency said. Other scientists have said an underwater landslide may also have contributed to the disaster.

Indonesia, a vast archipelago of more than 17,000 islands and home to 260 million people, lies along the Ring of Fire, an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

The massive eruption of Krakatoa killed more than 30,000 people and hurled so much ash that it turned day to night in the area and reduced global temperatures.

Just this past September, thousands were believed killed by a quake and tsunami that hit Indonesia's Sulawesi island. A quake on the island of Lombok killed 505 people in August.

Saturday's disaster came ahead of the anniversary of the massive Asian tsunami that hit Dec. 26, 2004, after a magnitude 9.1 earthquake off Sumatra island spawned huge waves. The giant wall of water killed some 230,000 people in a dozen countries, most of them in Indonesia.

Associated Press writers Margie Mason and Ali Kotarumalos in Jakarta, Indonesia, contributed to this report.

Death toll from attack in Afghan capital climbs to 40

By AMIR SHAH, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The death toll from an attack in the Afghan capital has climbed to 40, the Health Ministry said Tuesday, as police and rescue workers combed through the smoldering public welfare building where the gunmen held out for eight hours against security forces.

A suicide bomber detonated his explosives-laden vehicle outside the building Monday before at least three gunmen stormed in, rampaging through the office complex hunting for victims. Some employees managed to barricade themselves inside offices while police quickly evacuated more than 350 people.

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Health Ministry spokesman Wahid Majro says 40 people were killed and 29 were wounded. An earlier, higher toll provided by the ministry included the attackers.

No one immediately claimed the attack, but the Taliban and a local Islamic State affiliate have carried out a relentless wave of assaults on government targets in recent years.

Abdul Jalil, an employee who spoke to reporters Tuesday from his hospital bed, was on the second floor when the gunmen entered.

"They came in and they were shooting at everyone. They were shooting at the closed doors. If anyone was there they shot them," he said.

Jalil said he jumped from a second-story window and broke his leg. He managed to crawl 50 meters (yards) to a perimeter gate where security personnel helped him to safety. Jalil said at least five of his co-workers jumped with him from the window, and he saw his boss jump from a third-story window.

Khalil Rahman, who escaped unhurt, said "it was a massacre. We didn't know where to run."

He told reporters outside the charred building that he still could hear the sounds of the screaming.

"It was chaos. Everyone was running everywhere, trying to hide. Why would they kill us? We are Muslims. We are not Russians or Americans," Khalil said. He said he worked for the same public welfare department during the five-year rule of the Taliban, which ended with the 2001 U.S.-led invasion.

"Even during the Taliban we were doing the same job," he said. "What is our sin?"

An icon of Christmas cheer went dark, some parks close

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and CALVIN WOODWARD, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The lights were not twinkling. The toy trains were not whirring. Even the nearby bathrooms were locked.

The national Christmas tree, symbol of a country's seasonal cheer, instead stood as an icon of a government in paralysis, as the partial shutdown stretched into the holiday with an array of federal services frozen, some 800,000 public servants either idled or about to be and the disruption to the broader public bound to grow when the quiet spell ends later this week.

Already facilities at many national parks were shuttered, if the parks were accessible at all, and thousands of federal buildings were to remain closed when the work week resumed unless President Donald Trump and members of Congress quickly break through a budget impasse that the White House said could drag on into 2019.

Under cloudy skies in a brisk wind on the third day of the shutdown, the capital put on little holiday wonder for visitors like Greg Forcherio of Columbia, Maryland, a government contractor with no office to work in after the holidays as long as federal buildings stayed closed. He, his wife and their toddler on Monday came to see the giant, glittering spruce tree brought from Colorado to serve as the national Christmas tree, normally a focal point for Washington holiday visitors.

But a locked chain-link fence blocked access to the site and the nearby White House visitor's center and its bathrooms were closed, with a hand-scrawled sign directing visitors to portable toilets, which also were chained shut. "Kind of annoying when you've got young children," Forcherio said.

Access to the site was restored later Monday and finally, as night fell on Christmas Eve, the lights returned. The government had announced a day earlier that it would be sealed off because of the shutdown and because repairs had slowed after an episode of vandalism on the tree before the weekend. It reopened with money from the National Park Foundation, a charity.

A labor organization representing U.S. Treasury employees said Monday that federal workers around the country were cutting back on spending and changing holiday plans with family because of the shutdown.

"Just in case anyone still thinks a partial shutdown over a holiday weekend is harmless, think again," Tony Reardon of the National Treasury Employees Union said in a statement. "Your friends and neighbors around the country who work for the federal government are already showing signs of financial stress."

In the mountain town of Gatlinburg, Tennessee, Taylor Futch said the shutdown has already put extra

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stress on her family, whose sole income comes from her husband, a wildlife biologist who works with black bears for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. With two young daughters, the couple is facing an \$800 land payment due at the beginning of January as well as a mortgage, car payment and the usual bills.

"We're trying to gather up a couple things just in case I need to start selling stuff on Facebook or eBay," she said. "If his paycheck doesn't get here on Friday, we may not have enough for the mortgage."

Federal workers at the agencies affected by the gap in appropriations go unpaid as long as the shutdown lasts. They were expected to get retroactive pay once the impasse was broken.

The shutdown affected national parks unevenly, some still accessible with bare-bones staffing levels, some operating with money from states or charitable groups and others locked off. Arizona and Utah officials implemented plans to keep open Grand Canyon, Zion, Arches, Bryce Canyon and Zion national parks and provide services such as public restrooms, shuttles and trash collection. Concession operations such as lodges remained open, and Utah's money for parks in that state included visitor centers.

Among sites closed outright: in the southwest alone, Bandelier National Monument and Valles Caldera National Preserve in northern New Mexico, White Sands National Monument in southern New Mexico, Petrified National Forest National Park in northern Arizona and Casa Grande Ruins National Monument in south-central Arizona.

Of the roughly 800,000 federal employees facing deferred pay, more than half were deemed essential, such as U.S. Secret Service agents and Transportation Security Administration airport agent. About 380,000 were to be furloughed. Legislation ensuring that workers receive back pay was expected to clear Congress.

The immediate impact was blunted by the timing of the shutdown — spanning a weekend and now Christmas Eve and Christmas, both federal holiday days. But there was little chance to solve anything before Thursday at the earliest, when the House and Senate return to work.

Trump stayed at the White House, canceling plans to spend the holidays in Florida, and kept up a torrent of tweets on Monday about his critics and his insistence on money for a border wall, the issue at the heart of the budget dispute.

Not far from those quarters, Terri Lyons, visiting from Rockville, Maryland, with her 27-year-old daughter as they do every Christmas, found the lights off at one of her favorite monuments, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, when she visited Sunday night. A single guide tried to show tourists around in the darkness.

But people were drawn to the illuminated Lincoln Memorial, she said. "It was the only one with lights."

On Monday morning, standing at the fence surrounding the tree, Lyons listened to the foreign tourists around her and said she felt embarrassed. "I feel for the people trying to visit from outside of the country, what they think of us," she said.

Associated Press writer Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee, and Paul Davenport in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Trump tells boy that believing in Santa at 7 is 'marginal'

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump on Christmas Eve took calls from children anxious to find out where Santa was on his gift-giving journey.

In one conversation, Trump asked a 7-year-old named Coleman, "Are you still a believer in Santa?" He listened for a moment before adding, "Because at 7, it's marginal, right?" Trump listened again and chuckled before saying, "Well, you just enjoy yourself."

Mrs. Trump told a caller that Santa was in the Sahara. Several minutes later, she reported that Santa was far away in Morocco but would be at the caller's home on Christmas morning.

Mrs. Trump later tweeted that helping children track Santa "is becoming one of my favorite traditions!"

The NORAD Tracks Santa program became a Christmas Eve tradition after a child mistakenly called the forerunner to the North American Aerospace Defense Command in 1955 and asked to speak to Santa.

The program wasn't affected by the government shutdown. It's run by volunteers at Peterson Air Force

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Base in Colorado using pre-approved funding.

The Trumps later traveled to Washington National Cathedral to attend the Solemn Holy Eucharist of Christmas Eve. The cathedral's website said the program included readings from Holy Scripture, favorite congregational hymns and seasonal choral and instrumental music as well as Holy Communion. Passes were required.

Trump most likely would have been attending Christmas services at a church near his estate in Palm Beach, Florida. But he scrapped plans to head to Florida for the holidays after parts of the government were forced to shut down indefinitely in a budget stalemate with Congress.

GOP allies still trying to figure out how to read Trump

By LISA MASCARO and DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the first two years of President Donald Trump's administration close, Republican allies still haven't figured out how best to influence a leader who takes cues from the forces that swept him to office and seems to fear losing them above all else.

Republicans on Capitol Hill and even the president's closest advisers have been whipsawed over a series of recent actions that show how intently Trump relies on what is sometimes called his gut — an adherence to campaign promises he made that are being reinforced by a constellation of election gurus, Fox News personalities and others who hold sway like few others.

"I know he can be a handful, but he is the president," Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., told The Associated Press.

On the domestic front, no sooner had Trump signaled he might be backing off his demand for \$5 billion to build a border wall with Mexico — easing away from a partial government shutdown — than he took a U-turn after being scolded by conservative allies and pundits, who accused him of wavering on a campaign promise. Now, three days into the shutdown, his budget chief says it could drag into the New Year.

On issues abroad, Trump acted against the advice of his national security advisers and issued a surprise decision to pull troops from Syria. That prompted Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to step down and Trump's special envoy to the coalition fighting Islamic State militants, Brett McGurk, to resign. A drawdown of troops in Afghanistan also appeared to be in the works.

As the stock market tumbled on Christmas Eve, Trump lashed out at the Federal Reserve sowing more uncertainty over his public criticism of chairman Jerome Powell.

Now, as Republicans prepare to relinquish their hold on government, with Democrats taking control of the House in January, the opportunities — and limits — of the GOP alliance with the Trump White House may be running their course.

"I am all alone (poor me) in the White House waiting for the Democrats to come back and make a deal," the president tweeted.

Over and again, Trump has shown himself to be more of a tactical, than strategic, thinker, acting to avoid short-term pain rather than seeking long-term gain.

When Congress was about to keep the government running without a fight over border wall money, Trump felt the outcry from his base and intervened.

Trump told House Speaker Paul Ryan and other Republican leaders at the White House he wouldn't sign a Senate-passed compromise bill, which would have kept border security money at \$1.3 billion, not the \$5 billion he wanted for the wall with Mexico.

The House and Senate gavelled in for a brief Christmas Eve session Monday only to close up quickly for the holidays.

"Trump is plunging the country into chaos," the Democratic leaders Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer said in a joint statement. "Instead of bringing certainty into people's lives, he's continuing the Trump Shutdown just to please right-wing radio and TV hosts."

Trump's sudden moves on Syria left top Republicans on Capitol Hill criticizing his decision to pull out all of the roughly 2,000 U.S. troops. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., signed on to a letter with

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other GOP senators urging Trump to reconsider.

Graham used a weekend luncheon with conservative lawmakers at the White House to impress on the president the rightness of his instinct on both the border wall and the troop withdrawal in Syria, while also sharing with Trump some ideas for smoothing the policy around both issues.

"I told the president, I'm not arguing with your general philosophy," Graham said. "He's a good listener."

Graham reminded Trump that while shoring up the border wall is important, "a Southern wall isn't going to protect you against ISIS."

It's unclear if Trump was listening. The Pentagon said Monday that Mattis has already signed the order to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria.

And Mattis, who was also unhappy with Trump's order to develop plans to pull out half of the 14,000 troops in Afghanistan, was being pushed out two months early. Irritated by a surge of criticism over his decision, Trump said Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan will take over as acting secretary on Jan. 1.

Trump's allies chock up the president's year-end moves to a wager that the intense support from his base of voters will continue to propel his electoral chances in 2020 — even if polling suggests otherwise.

An analysis of VoteCast, a nationwide poll of more than 115,000 midterm voters conducted for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago, highlights the fractures.

A small, but significant slice of voters — the 18 percent who described themselves as only "somewhat" approving of the president — expressed concerns.

Compared with the 27 percent of voters who describe themselves as strong Trump supporters, the "somewhat" Trump voters are much more likely to disapprove of Trump on key issues and have reservations about his personality.

In a warning sign for Republicans, who just lost their House majority in the November election, those voters are more likely to have voted for Democrats in 2018. They are more educated, somewhat more likely to be women, and more likely to live in suburbs.

The president has been busy on the phone to allies on Capitol Hill, talking late into the night with some.

Trump seemed "exuberant" at the luncheon, said one Republican, Sen. Richard Shelby of Alabama, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, who was the only member of the GOP leadership to attend.

Ryan, who is retiring, and McConnell have become almost side actors to the year-end shutdown they both tried to avoid, but now will partly own. Both offices said it was up to Trump and Democrats to cut a deal.

Shelby said that at lunch Trump did seem like he wanted to reach a deal. At the same time, it's not always clear whether any of the hours of conversation result in decisions that drift too far from Trump's own instinct to stay close to his base.

"I don't think it's imminent we're going to reach a deal," Shelby said. "I wish we could."

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller, Catherine Lucey, Jill Colvin, and Jonathan Lemire contributed to this report.

Pope: Forgo greed and gluttony of Christmas for simple love

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis urged Christians on Monday to forgo the greed, gluttony and materialism of Christmas and to focus instead on its message of simplicity, charity and love.

Francis celebrated a Christmas Eve Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, opening a busy week for the pope that includes a Christmas Day message and blessing, a Dec. 26 prayer, New Year's Eve vespers and a Jan. 1 Mass.

During his homily Monday, Francis lamented that many people find their life's meaning in possessions when the biblical story of Christ's birth emphasizes that God appeared to people who were poor when it came to earthly possessions, but faithful.

"Standing before the manger, we understand that the food of life is not material riches but love, not

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gluttony but charity, not ostentation but simplicity," Francis said, dressed in simple white vestments.

"An insatiable greed marks all human history, even today, when paradoxically a few dine luxuriantly while all too many go without the daily bread needed to survive," he said.

Francis has focused on the world's poor and downtrodden, its refugees and marginalized, during his five-year papacy. The Catholic Church's first pope from Latin America instructed the Vatican to better care for the homeless around Rome, opening a barber shop, shower and medical clinic for them in the embracing colonnade of St. Peter's Square.

To extend his outreach this Christmas, Francis sent his trusted secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, to Iraq to celebrate with the country's long-suffering Christians.

Catholics are among the religious minorities targeted for Islamic State-inspired violence that has driven tens of thousands from their homes.

Parolin met Monday in Baghdad with Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi. He is scheduled in the coming days to travel to northern Iraq to meet with Kurdish leaders in Irbil and to celebrate Mass in Qaraqosh in the Nineveh plains, near Mosul, according to the Vatican.

The Vatican has for years expressed concern about the exodus of Christians from communities that have existed since the time of Jesus, and urged them to return when security conditions permit.

Francis is likely to refer to the plight of Christians in Iraq and Syria during his Christmas Day "Urbi et Orbi" (To the city and the world) speech. He is scheduled to deliver it Tuesday from the loggia of St. Peter's and again at Mass on New Year's Day, which the church marks as its world day for peace.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 25, the 359th day of 2018. There are six days left in the year. This is Christmas Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 25, 1991, Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev went on television to announce his resignation as the eighth and final leader of a communist superpower that had already gone out of existence.

On this date:

In A.D. 336, the first known commemoration of Christmas on Dec. 25 took place in Rome.

In 1066, William the Conqueror was crowned King of England.

In 1776, Gen. George Washington and his troops crossed the Delaware River for a surprise attack against Hessian forces at Trenton, New Jersey, during the American Revolutionary War.

In 1926, Hirohito became emperor of Japan, succeeding his father, Emperor Yoshihito.

In 1931, New York's Metropolitan Opera broadcast an entire live opera over radio for the first time: "Hansel and Gretel" by Engelbert Humperdinck.

In 1961, Pope John XXIII formally announced the upcoming convocation of the Second Vatican Council, which opened in Oct. 1962.

In 1977, comedian Sir Charles Chaplin died in Switzerland at age 88.

In 1989, ousted Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu (chow-SHES'-koo) and his wife, Elena, were executed following a popular uprising. Former baseball manager Billy Martin, 61, died in a traffic accident near Binghamton, New York.

In 1990, the World Wide Web, the system providing quick access to websites over the Internet, was born in Geneva, Switzerland, as computer scientists Tim Berners-Lee and Robert Cailliau (KAH'-yoh) created the world's first hyperlinked webpage.

In 1995, singer Dean Martin died at his Beverly Hills home at age 78.

In 2006, James Brown, the "Godfather of Soul," died in Atlanta at age 73.

In 2009, passengers aboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253 foiled an attempt to blow up the plane as it was landing in Detroit by seizing Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (OO'-mahr fah-ROOK' ahh-DOOL'-moo-TAH'-lahb), who tried to set off explosives in his underwear. (Abdulmutallab later pleaded guilty and was

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sentenced to life in prison.)

Ten years ago: Pope Benedict XVI urged a world confronting a financial crisis, conflict, and increasing poverty not to lose hope at Christmas, but to join in "authentic solidarity" to prevent global ruin. President-elect Barack Obama spent a private Christmas with family and close friends in Hawaii. Singer, dancer and actress Eartha Kitt died in Weston, Conn. at age 81. Actress Ann Savage died in Los Angeles at age 87.

Five years ago: Pope Francis offered Christmas wishes for a better world, praying for protection for Christians under attack, battered women and trafficked children, peace in the Middle East and Africa, and dignity for refugees fleeing misery and conflict around the globe.

One year ago: In his traditional Christmas message, Pope Francis called for a two-state solution in the Middle East, and prayed that confrontation could be overcome on the Korean Peninsula. Harsh winter weather gripped much of the country on Christmas, with bitter cold in the Midwest and a blizzard moving into New England. Russian election officials formally barred opposition leader Alexei Navalny from running for president, prompting him to call for a boycott of the March, 2018 vote.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Dick Miller is 90. Author Anne Roiphe is 83. Actress Hanna Schygulla (SHEE'-goo-lah) is 75. Rhythm-and-blues singer John Edwards (The Spinners) is 74. Actor Gary Sandy is 73. Singer Jimmy Buffett is 72. Pro and College Football Hall-of-Famer Larry Csonka is 72. Country singer Barbara Mandrell is 70. Actress Sissy Spacek is 69. Former White House adviser Karl Rove is 68. Actress CCH Pounder is 66. Singer Annie Lennox is 64. Reggae singer-musician Robin Campbell (UB40) is 64. Country singer Steve Wariner is 64. Singer Shane MacGowan (The Pogues, The Popes) is 61. Baseball Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson is 60. The former Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, Christina Romer, is 60. Actress Klea Scott is 50. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is 47. Rock musician Noel Hogan (The Cranberries) is 47. Singer Dido is 47. Rock singer Mac Powell (Third Day) is 46. Rhythm-and-blues singer Ryan Shaw is 38. Country singer Alecia Elliott is 36. Pop singers Jess and Lisa Origliasso (The Veronicas) are 34. Actress Perdita Weeks is 33. Rock singer-musician Lukas Nelson (Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real) is 30.

Thought for Today: "He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree." — Roy L. Smith, American clergyman (1887-1963).