

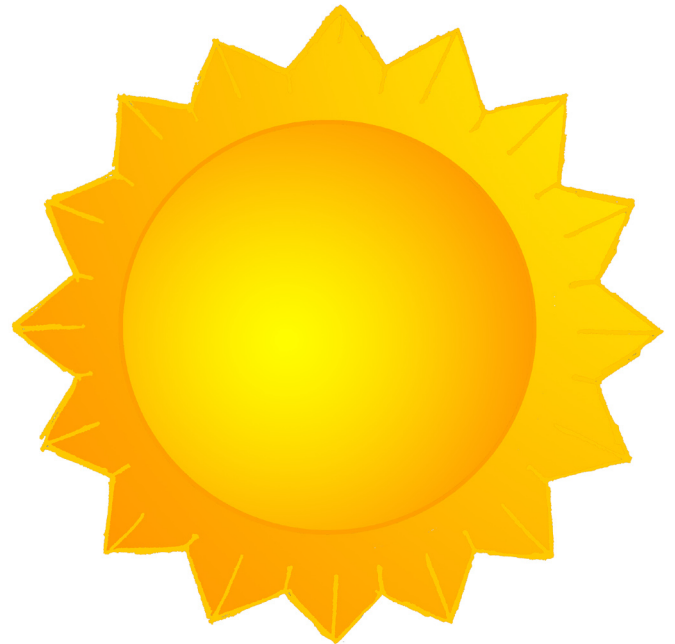
THE WINTER SOLSTICE

WHEN IS THE SOLSTICE?

The Winter Solstice is usually December 21st or 22nd. The Winter Solstice is the longest night of the year and the shortest day of the year. It is the day that many refer to as the First day of winter. Which means that the days will get longer and longer, and every day there will be a minute or two more of sunlight than the day before.

WHAT IS THE SOLSTICE?

The solstice is the day that the sun stands still. (Solstice means, *sun stands still*) In winter, the sun is receding, which means that the daylight is less and less everyday. And then, on the solstice the sun stands still... it doesn't continue to become less in light and it hasn't started increasing in light either. The world stands still - waiting for the sun to return. And it does, and from the Winter solstice to the Summer Solstice the sun increases in strength, daylight begins to grow and grow more everyday. From the Summer solstice to the Winter solstice, the sun decreases in strength and daylight disappears more and more everyday, until on the Winter solstice was again.



WHAT IS THE WINTER SOLSTICE?

The Winter Solstice is a celebration of love and of light and with it the returning of the sun! It was celebrated many, many years ago, and is still celebrated by many of the 'Earth-based Spiritualities or Ancient Religions' today. These people relied on the sun returning, because it gave them hope that warmer weather was coming and that soon they would once again have crops in the field and food being stored away for the following winter. To times of old, Pagans would enlist the help of Shamans to ensure that the sun would return, such as Shaman Claus.

WHO IS SHAMAN CLAUS?

Shaman Claus, the Pagan representation for one who helped bring light back to the world. It is also the new age name for the spiritual man, who is dressed in red wool and white fur, who tends to be recognized by many other names, such as; St. Nicholas, Kris Kringle, Papa Noel, Father Christmas and Santa Claus. Shamans are Pagans who work in both the spiritual and physical world, bringing light back to the world. They were called upon to help ensure that the sun's light would stop decreasing and begin increasing in strength. The more that people had faith in their beliefs, the stronger the sun would return to be, the better the crops would be in the summer and the bigger their harvests would be in the fall. He is known for giving to the world the greatest gift of all, the returning of the sun.

HOW DO YOU CELEBRATE THE SOLSTICE?

Today, many of the traditional decorations, familiar and iconic figures and even some of the stories and beliefs, came from Ancient Celebrations such as; The Yule Log.

The Yule Log was once more than a tasty dessert after a family feast. It first originated as a great Yule Bon-fire, that was made to welcome the returning sun. Eventually over time, the bonfire was brought into the home. The largest tree on their property would be cut down with a special ritual and then blessings and other wishes for the new year were decorated onto the tree before slowly burning it in the hearth (or fireplace). They would put the tip of the tree into the fire first, while the rest of the tree lay across the floor of their home, it would then be slowly pushed into the fire, slowly burning it over the holiday season.



As time went on, people still cut down a tree, but they would cut a section off the bottom to be blessed and used as their Yule Log, which would still be burned slowly throughout the holiday season. Then the rest of the tree was decorated for family and friends to gather around, welcoming the return of the sun, the return of warmth and of light.

Today, many people still buy a real log with candles in it or a plastic log with battery operated candles to act as their Yule log.

WHAT IS YULE?

Yule or Yuletide, is the name for the Winter Solstice celebrated by Pagans and other Earth-based spiritualities. Traditionally it begins on the Solstice eve. Though over the years it has changed with the times and many people recognize the Yule celebration starting on December 24th and going for another 12 days.

WHO ARE PAGANS?

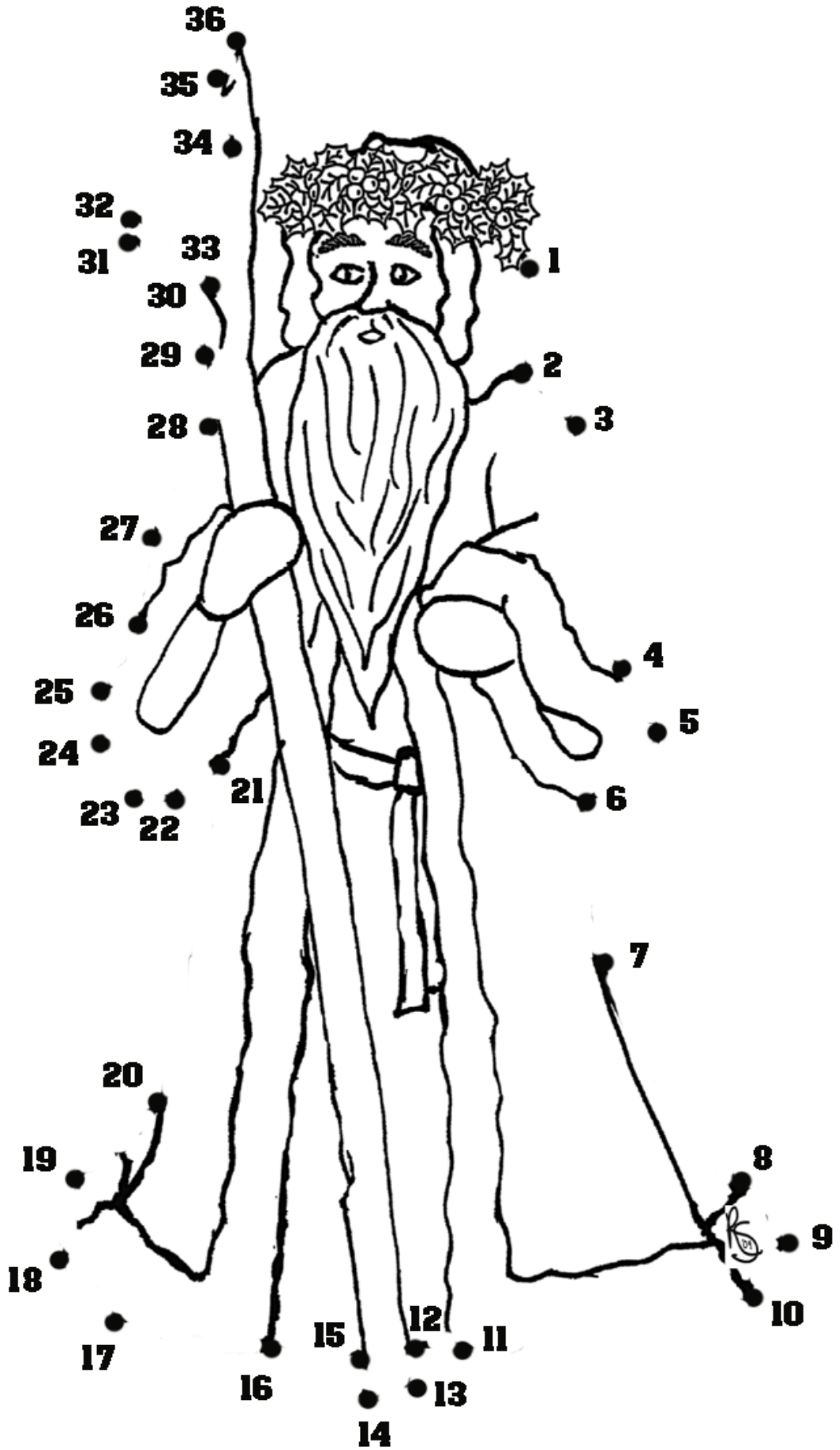
Like the Christians, Jews and other belief systems, Pagans are a group of like-minded people with similar spiritual beliefs. Pagans are one of many Earth-based Spiritualities, meaning they believe that everything is magickal and elemental. Pagans celebrate the agricultural changing of the seasons, based on the sun's movement and placement in the sky. ---

OTHER NAMES FOR THE WINTER SOLSTICE:

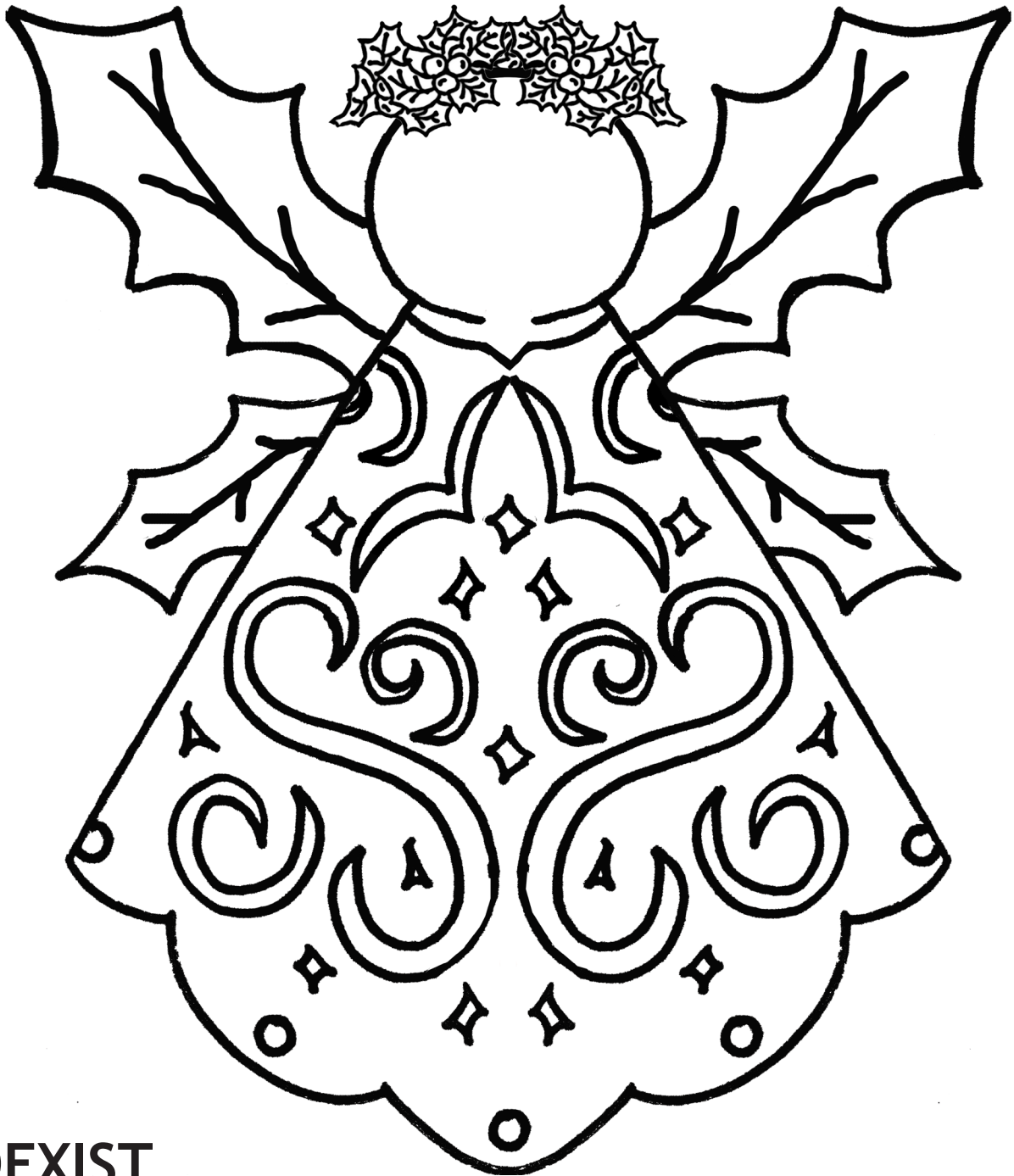
- Yule / Yuletide
- Mid-Winter
- First Day of Winter

The Celts (Celtic People), had only 2 seasons in a year: the Cold Season and the Warm Season. Their seasons changed on the Spring and Autumnal Equinoxes. Following the Autumnal Equinox, winter would begin for the Ancient people. And since the Solstice is exactly half way between the Solstice - they considered the Winter Solstice as Mid-Winter. Today, we see it as the First Day of winter... but then we break our year up in to four seasons.

Shaman Claus



Peace on Earth



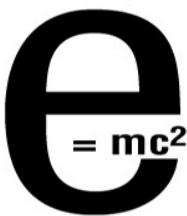
COEXIST



Islam



Buddhism



Science



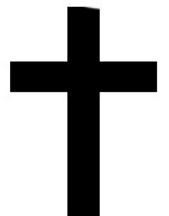
Judaism



Paganism



Taoism



Christianity