



# Bethesda Shighatini

## Christmas Traditions in Shighatini

(Walter and Christine Msangi shared the following description to help us visualize their holiday celebration)

### Shighatini Lutheran Parish Christmas December 24, Christmas Eve:

During the day family members clean and decorate the Parish House (church). Sometimes they bring live animals inside before the evening service (8-9 p.m.) to make the evening as much like Jesus' birth as possible.

Passages are read during the Christmas Eve service:

Genesis 3:15

Genesis 12:1-3

Genesis 49:10

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Ezekiel 36:26-27

Isaiah 60:1

Malachi 3:1

Luke 2:1-7

Luke 2:8-14

Luke 2:15-20

Isaiah 9:6

Psalm 110:4

Ten children (who have not yet been confirmed) read 12 Bible verses that show the promise of God to give his son to us. Individuals light candles during the service and sing, "Silent Night" in the Pare language. Shighatini Parish music leaders (Evangelist Peter with others) are composing Christmas songs that the Shighatini choirs will sing just for this year's Christmas Eve Service.

**December 25, Christmas Day:** We return to the Parish House at 10 a.m. for a two-hour celebration of Christ's birth with song and dance. Many Christmas songs have been translated into Pare and are in our hymnal. Children also sing songs and read poems.

**December 26 Second Day Of Christmas:** "Boxing Day" is a national holiday—a tradition from the British—and observed with a 10-11 a.m. service at the Parish House. Confirmation is held in many parishes on this day. This year, on December 26, 2007, Pastor Walter and Christine's oldest daughter, Dorcas, and oldest son, Johannes, will be confirmed. After the regular service, the pastor holds a special meeting with all the people who have "come home for Christmas." The group discusses ideas to make the Parish more viable, e.g., to repair or build a new parish house.

### Shighatini Family Christmas

**December 24, Christmas Eve:** Following the Christmas Eve service, families prepare the food for their Christmas dinner celebration. Most families prepare "pilau"—spiced white rice cooked in broth with meat and vegetables or seafood (but not lutefisk!).

**December 25 Christmas Day:** After the Christmas Service families are expected to meet at the home of the oldest male in the extended family. After eating, the children go play with relatives and friends (but are expected to be home by 5:30, before dark). The adults have a family conference where they discuss how each member of the extended family is doing and what special needs they may have for the next year, e.g., attendance and/or performance in school, funds to pay school fees or health bills, etc. Families are also expected to invite others, including neighbors and friends, Muslims and other non-Christians into their homes for eating and celebrating as a way to build community.

**December 26 Second Day Of Christmas, "Boxing Day":** After the morning service families meet again to eat and celebrate, especially the sharing of gift boxes with family and friends. There are no restrictions on what people can eat or drink on "Boxing Day." Some families put up a Christmas tree, often decorated with Christmas cards they receive from friends and family members. Decorations often are left up long into the new year.



Eileen Klonglan visits with Pastor Walter about Christmas