

## LutherFacts #1



The view that Martin Luther introduced the Christmas tree to 16th-century Germany is based more on legend than historical fact. The story alleges that Luther, walking on a clear December night, was so dazzled by the bright stars shining above, that he returned and added candles to the unadorned evergreen tree that he, like many other Germans, had begun placing in their homes. No exact evidence has ever been uncovered to support this story. Yet it has been documented that Germans in the 16th century joined other Europeans in adopting an earlier custom of placing cut fir trees in their homes to provide a little green to help endure the long winter months. It is also true that in the 18th-century, German immigrants in Pennsylvania introduced the Christmas tree to the larger American population as part of the celebration of the birth of Christ.

So why the identifying of Martin Luther as the individual who first began this practice? And why was this done with no proof to back it up? Perhaps it was the deep association Luther had with bringing profound religious upheaval to Western society during the 16th century. Whatever the truth is, the story clearly enhances the centrality of Luther as a man of fact and myth in the broader Protestant Reformation.