Fire Safety Doesn’t Take a Holiday
How to protect you and your home during the holiday season and what to do if you are a victim of a residential fire

They say “there’s no place like home for the holidays,” so don’t let a residential fire displace you and your family this weekend. From electrical issues to candle mishaps, the National Fire Protection Association reports that an average of 357,000 residential fires occur each year.[1] Given the recent residential fires in Charlestown and Beverly, MA, consumers may be wondering what they can

CONTINUED ON page 12

St Peter Academy
Where Learning Happens Twelve Months A Year!

Serving students from Early Childhood 18 months old through Eighth Grade

A St Peter Academy education enables a child to develop confidence and self-esteem, teaching him or her to embrace responsibility and to think critically as well as compassionately. Above all else, St Peter Academy fosters a love of learning. Provided with the ingredients for success, students are prepared for a lifetime of academic excellence, and they are motivated to pursue their spiritual, moral, and intellectual possibilities.

St Peter Academy is an independent private community based early childhood through grade 8 school dedicated to providing a high quality education to children of all faiths from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

We welcome the opportunity to have you visit St Peter Academy to see for yourself that ours is a unique and wonderful learning community.

Individual Tours Available Upon Request

St Peter Academy
371 West Fourth Street, South Boston, MA
Telephone 617-268-0750
Email SPA@StPeterAcademy.com
Website StPeterAcademy.com
EDITORIAL

Christmas is a Very Special Time of Year

There is no other time of the year that even comes close to Christmas. To children, the Christmas season is magical. It’s a time in their lives when memories are made that will live forever. Even when we become adults, those Christmas memories, especially if they are caught in photos or video, will bring smiles to our faces. It’s one of the good things in life. Happy times to cherish forever and pass on to new family members, as they grow.

The brilliantly lit Christmas trees and neighborhood homes, the gifts, the pageants, the music, the movies that we look forward to year after year, the time spent with family and good friends and the image of Santa everywhere you turn, adds to the tradition that so many people hold so near and dear to their hearts.

That it was all started with the birth of the Baby Jesus more than 2000 years ago, is the reason for the season. It makes this time of year not only festive, but also sacred to more than 2 billion people around the world and certainly to the people of South Boston.

From all of us here at South Boston Today to our friends and neighbors, have a Merry Christmas. May this year bring good tidings to one and all.

"Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful" - Norman Vincent Peale
W hew! The election of 2016 is finally over, finished, done with. Most sane Americans have now either happily or grudgingly resigned themselves to the fact that our new president will be Donald Trump. Those are the sane ones. Then of course, there are Whoopie Goldberg and the other ‘ladies’ of The View, CNN and the New York Times and most of Hollywood - all of whom had their advice and pleas ignored by the public, yet are not quite bright enough to understand what happened.

But the whining from the above has reached hysterical and hilarious levels. While most people are paying attention to their Christmas lists, these unfortunate folks keep expanding the list of reasons that Hillary lost the election. And this list, in and of itself also makes for comical entertainment.

Let’s take a partial look at whose fault it is and what caused her to lose, according to those on the left: Putin and the Russians, WikiLeaks and other hackers, FBI Director James Comey, Bernie Sanders supporters, the NRA, Angry white males, The Founding Fathers, that old standby George Bush, Uma Abedin and her husband Anthony Weiner, Rush Limbaugh, Southern Red Necks, FOX News and of course racism and sexism. It’s probably an oversight that they have not blamed Global Warming – yet.

But a reality check reveals who and what were the real causes:

It was Hillary herself, her attitude and her out of date left-wingish ideas. This isn’t the 1960’s or even the 1990’s. Tax hikes, open borders, disdain for the military and police, restrictions on the 1st and 2nd Amendments, crushing regulations on businesses, condescension, corruption, dishonesty, Benghazi, arrogance and the opinion that she was entitled to the office of the presidency didn’t play as well as she had hoped in 2016.

But Election 2016 did give many people welcomed gifts that might not fit under a Christmas tree but are gifts just the same:

The Obamas and their legacy – gone, John Kerry – gone, with any luck, half of Hollywood gone to Canada. Yeah, like that will ever happen. But we can always hope. Harry Reid – gone. Watching the entire Obama Administration packing their bags and going away is one of the best gifts of all to millions of Americans.

It will be a refreshing change to have a President, who loves the country and will not go around the world apologizing for America’s greatness. It will also be nice to have a former general in charge of ‘Homeland Security’. That makes perfect sense to me, as does having another former general and a competent and proven warrior heading up the Department of Defense. While liberals are horrified at Trump’s cabinet picks, they are a huge improvement over what’s there now; especially in the case of John Kerry.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7
Probation convictions overturned, DeLeo declares ‘complete exoneration’

This is a shocker: A federal appeals court has overturned the convictions of three Department of Probation employees accused of rigging the agency’s hiring system in favor of powerful pols’ patronage picks, saying the federal government “overstepped its bounds” by applying criminal laws to hiring practices within state government, reports the Globe’s Milton Valencia. The ruling is most definitely a direct rebuke, as Valencia notes, to federal prosecutors like US Attorney Carmen Ortiz. House Speaker Robert DeLeo, once tagged by prosecutors as an unindicted co-conspirator in the probation hiring scandal, is declaring unequivocal victory for himself and House members tied to the case. “The decision of the Court constitutes a complete exoneration for this institution and all of its members,” DeLeo said in a statement, as reported by SHNS’s Matt Murphy (pay wall). “These false and scurrilous allegations can now be given an appropriate burial.”

So should we finally bury the U.S. Supreme Court’s anti-patronage ruling?

As House Speaker Robert DeLeo pronounces the burial of the Probation Department convictions and scandal, is it time to finally bury the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1990 ruling that outlawed over-the-top patronage as a violation of workers’ constitutional First Amend-
Christmas in South Boston 2016

Well, there’s no doubt now, Christmas is nearly upon us and, as is the case every season at this time, it brings with it a feeling different than any other. To most people, it holds a mix of sensations. It’s hectic, yet there is a feeling of peace in the air. There is a rush of shopping, and perhaps one or more special events and gatherings that tradition dictates we must attend. Yet in the middle of it all, if we’re lucky, we are able to bring the rapid pace to a welcomed slow down. Even if it’s just for a short time to savor the good feelings, as we walk by a Nativity Scene or catch a children’s choir singing carols at a school. Perhaps it is a church pageant, which gives us a chance to catch our breath and bask in the warmth and the true meaning of what Christmas is all about.

For over 2000 years since the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, much of the world has considered Christmastime to be very special. Yes, there is also Santa Claus, reindeer and elves to entertain and fascinate the kids. Huge displays of bright and colorful lights bring smiles to the faces of most. All of it, the religious and non-religious, combine to make it wonderful.

Here in South Boston, like most places, tradition continues especially at Christmas. Homes are lit up and decorated, our schools are festive and churches are hubs of activity with caroling, Masses and Services, featuring beautifully decorated altars. It may be cold outside, but there’s always a warm glow and welcoming atmosphere inside of our Churches.

Like most, we here at South Boston Today cannot help but be impressed with all the special happenings that go on in our wonderful community at Christmastime. From the Christmas caroling at Marian Manor, to the children singing like Angels with all their hearts and souls during their plays and pageants that herald the birth of Jesus. The festivities touch all age groups among us.

There is ‘Toys for Tots’, where people are happy to drop off brand new toys for kids and families who otherwise might not have any. Conveniently and thankfully, there are many drop off points hosted by several groups in cooperation with the US Marines. We have Christmas tree lightings in our public squares. The lamp posts along East and West Broadway display the wreaths that have been hung with great care on them to add even more spirit to the season. And who can forget the annual Christmas Day Dinner held each year at St. Monica/St. Augustine Church, where hundreds gather for a delicious home cooked meal. Dozens of dedicated neighborhood volunteers are happy to donate their time to bring pleasure and great food to make sure that no one need spend Christmas alone?

South Boston at Christmastime is such a special place that not only are long time traditions passed on from generation to generation, but new ones that have been added over the relatively recent years such as the 4th Presbyterian Church’s Old Fashioned Christmas Concert. The 4th Church’s Gospel singers and choir are so talented they can compete with the best anywhere. Being there can’t help but put you in the Christmas spirit.

The happenings listed above are just some of the ways South Bostonians celebrate the Christmas Season together. Where everyone, no matter what our faith, is invited to enjoy. When you add to all of this, intimate gatherings all across our community of family and good friends to enjoy the closeness of one another’s company at parties and dinner it really does explain why most people look forward to this time of year.

As we said, Christmas is a very special season of the year in nearly every part of the world and that can certainly be said for Christmas in South Boston 2016.

Happy holidays!

Warm wishes for the season, from our house to yours.

MASSACHUSETTS CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY

@MassConvention  /MassConvention  massconvention.com
Who Were The Shepherds At 1st Christmas?

Who were the shepherds that were present at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem? This has long been a story that has fascinated the masses over the centuries. Over 2000 years ago, some of the most notable people present after the Baby Jesus was born were the humble shepherds tending to their flocks. These shepherds of the time were considered to be lowly and of little importance, as far as most people living then were concerned.

The shepherds were wandering nomads thought to not even have dwellings to live in, but rather actually lived out in the fields with their flocks. This was a lifestyle that existed long before the birth of Christ and still to this day, in parts of the Middle East, nomadic shepherds can be found living pretty much the way they did at the time of the birth of Jesus.

These shepherds had traditionally been without means or influence, yet God chose them over lawyers and scribes and wealthy landowners and other people of great wealth to send a group of Angels to announce that the Son of God had been born in a manger in the town of David.

As the story of the first Christmas goes, an Angel appeared to the shepherds, who were at first terrified at the sight of the Angel. The Angel then said to the shepherds “Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger”. Then other Angels appeared and helped reassure the shepherds. When the Angels had left them, the shepherds decided to go to Bethlehem to see for themselves this event that had happened. And they did and found it to be true. They then went in all directions, far and wide to spread the story of the birth of the Baby Jesus, the Son of God.

It has long been debated why the shepherds were chosen by God to be the first to receive the announcement of the birth by the Angels. But most believe that it is because God values all people, no matter what their status in life and chose the most humble and unassuming to be blessed with the good news first.

Ireland Ambassador Visits the New England Council

Anne Anderson, Ireland Ambassador to the United States, recently spoke to members of the New England Council. The New England Council is the region’s oldest regional business organization, dedicated to promoting economic development and high quality of life in the six-state region.
On Sunday, January 1, 2017, at 10:30 a.m., one of Boston’s oldest traditions will continue with an estimated 600 people plunging into Boston Harbor for the annual “L Street Brownies” New Year’s Day Plunge. The plunge is hosted by the L Street Brownies at the BCYF Curley Community Center, 1663 Columbia Road in South Boston, “K” Street entrance.

Due to the tide schedule, it will start at 10:30 a.m. Other information you should know:
• Doors open at 9:30 a.m. and close at 12 noon;
• Participants should arrive dressed for the water as the men’s and women’s locker and shower rooms will not be available until after;
• Water shoes are suggested due to shells and rocks left by the tide;
• Pets are not allowed, please leave your furry friends at home;
• There is no need to pre-register. You will be asked to fill out a short form when you arrive;
• Lifeguards will be on duty;
• Participants must be age 16 and older.

This event has taken place for over 100 years. The Brownies are the oldest “polar bear” club in America. The Brownies promote health, fun and friendship. Each year, the plunge is dedicated to past and recently deceased Brownies. Spectators are welcome and creative costumes are encouraged.

Join the “L Street Brownies” Annual New Year’s Day Plunge

Aalways a sure sign of Christmas in South Boston is the beautiful Nativity Scene on display in the yard of the Hicks Family home on Columbia Rd. It’s an attraction that brings smiles to crowds of people each season.

Always a sure sign of Christmas in South Boston is the beautiful Nativity Scene on display in the yard of the Hicks Family home on Columbia Rd. It’s an attraction that brings smiles to crowds of people each season.

Merry Christmas. Christmas is truly a special time of the year. The cold weather is tempered by the warmth of this unique season and time of the year. Whether you plan to spend Christmas with family, close friends or both, may it be one that makes cherished memories.

May everyone find the time to take in the lights, the music, the decorations and yes, even the movies that most of us have seen a thousand times but still enjoy. Whether you plan to travel or stay local, I hope all of you have a safe and enjoyable Christmas. For those of the Jewish faith, a Merry Christmas to you too as well as a Happy Hanukkah. And may the New Year bring to all, success, good health, happiness and peace.

John Ciccone
Continued from page 3

In closing, let me take a little space at the end of this week’s column to wish all of our friends, neighbors and in fact everyone reading this week (and those who are not), a

South Boston Nativity Scene

Elliott Physical Therapy

960 Morrissey Boulevard, Dorchester, MA 02122
plenty of convenient off street parking!

www.elliottphysicaltherapy.com
May you find health, happiness and peace during this Holiday Season and through the coming year.
## Recent South Boston Real Estate Sales

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Merry Christmas
AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

May the joy of the Christmas Season always be in your heart!

Michael J. Donovan
Clerk Magistrate
Suffolk Superior Civil Court

Happy Holidays
from
Suffolk County Sheriff
Steven W. Tompkins
& The Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department

Wishing You
A Very
Merry Christmas &
A Happy New Year!

C. I. A.
Castle Island Association
Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year filled with Joy and Peace!

Senator Linda Dorcena Forry and Family

May the peace of God be in your hearts, always.
Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Nick Collins
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Happy Holidays & Best Wishes For the New Year from my family to yours!

Bill Linehan
City Councilor, District Two

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Paid for by the Flaherty Committee
www.MichaelFlaherty.com
Fire Safety
CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

do to protect their family, home and possessions from fires.
To help make the holidays joyful and safe, Allstate offers the following tips:
1. Install new batteries in and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.
2. Have chimneys and furnaces inspected annually before the holidays to make sure they’re safe for use.
3. Read the fine print on your holiday lights to avoid overloading outlets or power strips, and when lighting up the outside of your home, only use lights and extension cords specified for outdoor use.
4. Keep your Christmas tree away from any heating source and, if you have a real tree, assign a family member to water it each day so that it doesn’t dry out.
5. Never leave burning candles unattended and always place them out of reach of children. Make a part of your routine to check that all candles are extinguished before you go to bed each night.
6. Have a fire extinguisher readily available in your home.
“With so much focus on shopping, decorating, making holiday meals and other preparations, people may overlook simple, but important safety steps to protect their homes,” said Adaias Souza, Allstate agency owner in Somerville. “Now is a great time to make sure your home is safe and secure, so you can enjoy a hazard-free holiday with friends and loved ones this weekend.”

Picking up the pieces
Those who are a victim of an apartment or home fire may be wondering, “What’s next?” To help consumers get on the road to recovery, Allstate recommends the following:
1. Report your loss immediately to your insurance carrier to start the claim process
2. Have the following information on-hand when reporting your claim:
   o Information about what was damaged and when
   o The extent of the damage
   o Home association information and rules, if applicable
   o Your home inventory, including photos and/or video
   o Current contact information, including telephone numbers and mailing address
3. Maintain copies of your insurance policy, home inventory and other personal records in a fireproof safe and/or duplicated and stored away from the home
4. If you have not already done so, begin to put together an inventory of your belongings to provide to your insurance company
5. If your home is not safe to live in, ask your insurance carrier about temporary housing or advance payments for living expenses, depending on the coverage purchased. They may be able to assist you with temporary living expenses, such as the cost for hotel rooms
6. Maintain receipts for items purchased while you are displaced from your home, including for meals, clothing and toiletries. Reimbursement for these items may be part of your home/condo/renter’s insurance coverage.

About Allstate
The Allstate Corporation (NYSE: ALL) is the nation’s largest publicly held personal lines insurer, protecting approximately 16 million households from life’s uncertainties through auto, home, life and other insurance offered through its Allstate, Esurance, Encompass and Answer Financial brand names. Now celebrating its 85th anniversary as an insurer, Allstate is widely known as an insurer, Allstate is widely known through the slogan “You’re In Good Hands With Allstate®.” Allstate agencies are in virtually every local community in America. In 2015, The Allstate Foundation, Allstate, its employees and agency owners gave $36 million to support local communities.
Santa Visits St Peter Academy!

With just two weeks until Christmas, Santa Claus wrapped up some last minute Christmas list gathering and photographs with the kids decked out in all their Christmas finery at the St. Peter Academy Breakfast with Santa on Saturday.

More than 100 kids of all ages were on hand to share breakfast with Santa and get those last Christmas wish lists delivered into Santa’s hands. Parents, relatives and friends were also treated to a wonderful show put on by St Peter Academy students.

Mr. Andrius Dilba, the school principal, stated “It’s always fun to be a part of the Breakfast with Santa.” “It’s so nice to see all the families with their young kids out here enjoying one of our community events.”

Mr. Dilba said each year Breakfast with Santa gets bigger and bigger, and that this year was one of the best turnouts. The Home School Association, parents and teachers put together a magical day. “It is a true joy to see the community and our families turn out to support our great school.”

Our biggest thank you to goes to Santa. He was so excited to listen to the kids’ holiday wishes,” Mr. Dilba said. “He makes Breakfast with Santa a special stop on his holiday visit in South Boston.”

And in keeping with the spirit of Christmas – The St Peter Academy Student Council spearheaded their very own giving campaign and collected new toys to be distributed to South Boston Families in need. The toys were delivered after the Breakfast with Santa event to the South Boston/Seaport Catholic Collaborative.

St Peter Academy, an independent community based private school, is South Boston’s only Toddler (18 months) through Grade 8 School. It is privately funded, enriched with extended learning hours and summer programs, and fosters a nurturing, safe and individualized environment. The student/teacher ratio is 6:1 which is ideal for creating exemplary instructional models filled with interactive learning opportunities. The school is located at 371 West Fourth Street and is currently accepting applications for the year round toddler program and 2016 and 2017 school years – To learn more about the school and all programs visit www.stpeteracademy.com or schedule a private tour by contacting Ms. Doreen Brown or Ms Maria Blasi at 617-268-0750 or email SPA@StPeterAcademy.com.
Christmas Mass Schedules

Christmas Eve: December 24th
St. Monica/St. Augustine Church: 331 Old Colony Ave. 12:30 pm (Spanish)
Our Lady of Good Voyage Chapel: 69 Northern Ave. 7:00pm
St. Peter Lithuanian Church: 75 Flaherty Way. 4:00pm (English), 5:50pm (Lithuanian)
St. George Cathedral Albanian Orthodox: 523 E. Broadway. 7:00pm
Gate of Heaven Church: 615 E. Fourth Street: 4:00pm, 10:00pm
St. Brigid Church: 841 E. Broadway: 4:00pm
Fourth Presbyterian Church: 340 Dorchester Street: 7:00pm
St. Augustine Chapel: 4:00pm
Hub Church: 401 D Street – A Loft: 6:30pm

Christmas Day: December 25th
St. Monica/St. Augustine: 9:30am (English), 12:30 pm (Spanish)
Our Lady of Good Voyage: 11:30 am
St. Peter: 10:00am (English), 11:00am (Lithuanian)
St. George Cathedral: 10:00am
Holy Trinity Albanian Orthodox Church: 245 D Street 10:00am
Gate of Heaven: 9:00am
St. Brigid 10:00am, 11:00am
South Baptist Church: 80 L Street: 10:30am
Fourth Presbyterian: 10:30am
Our Lady of Good Voyage: 11:30am

SUFFOLK. ss. Case No. 16E0188PP

PROBATE COURT.
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

To Eileen Bourdon of Freeport in the County of Grand Bahama Island, Maureen Curry of Boston in the County of Suffolk, The Heirs of Margaret Bourdon Currently Unascertained, Gail Wick of Parts Unknown, NSTAR Electric of Burlington in the County of Essex and to the City of Boston in the County of Suffolk, and to all persons interested

A Petition has been presented to said Court by Sharon Bourdon of Quincy in the County of Norfolk representing that she holds as tenant in common undivided part or share of certain land lying in Boston in said County of Suffolk, and briefly described as follows: See Attached Description setting forth that she desires that – all the following described part – of said land may be sold at private sale for not less than Five Hundred Thousand ($500,000) dollars and praying that partition may be made of all the land aforesaid according to law, and to that end that a commissioner be appointed to make such partition and be ordered to make sale and conveyance of all, or any part of said land which the Court finds cannot be advantageously divided either at private sale or public auction, and be ordered to distribute the net proceeds thereof.

If you desire to object thereto you or your attorney should file a written appearance in said Court at Boston before ten o’clock in the forenoon-on the 12th day of January, 2017.

Witness, Joan P. Armstrong, Esquire, First Judge of said Court, this 8th day of November, 2016
Felix D. Arroyo, Register.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
TO THE HONORABLE, THE JUSTICES OF THE PROBATE AND FAMILY COURT IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SUFFOLK:
RESPECTFULLY represents Sharon Bourdon of 249 Washington Street, Apt. #3, Quincy, MA 02169 in the County of Norfolk, that she hold as tenant in common an undivided part or share of the following described land situated in South Boston known and numbered as 11 O Street in the County of Suffolk, which she wishes to hold in severalty:

A certain parcel of land with buildings thereon, situated in that part of Boston called South Boston, being the Lot numbered 11 as shown on a plan drawn by William Kelley, Surveyor, dated December 23, 1895, and recorded with Suffolk Registry of Deeds in Book 8818, Page 295 and 512 ---as heirs at law of--- Walter E. Bourdon, Jr. late of South Boston, being the Lot numbered 11 as shown on a plan drawn by William Kelley, Surveyor, dated December 23, 1895, and recorded with Suffolk Registry of Deeds in Book 8818, Page 295 and 512 ---as heirs at law of--- Walter E. Bourdon, Jr. late of South Boston in the County of Suffolk, deceased, and your petitioner further represents that the Southerly boundary line of said Lot 11 is one hundred twenty-five (125) feet distant Northerly from East Second Street according to said plan.

The Southerly boundary line of said Lot 11 is one hundred twenty-five (125) feet distant Northerly from East Second Street according to said plan.
The common title to said land is derived under Deeds dated 3-2-1968 and 3-11-1968 recorded with Suffolk County Registry of Deeds Book 8818 and 8819 Page 295 and 512 ---as heirs at law of--- Walter E. Bourdon, Jr. late of South Boston in the County of Suffolk, deceased, and your petitioner further represents that the names and residences of all the tenants in common and their respective shares and proportions and the nature thereof, are as follows:

Sharon Bourdon 249 Washington St., Apt 3 Quincy, MA 02169 19.443% Co-Owner
Eileen Bourdon PO Box F/41082 Freeport, Grand Bahama Island 19.443% Co-Owner
Maureen Curry 11 O Street, #1 South Boston, MA 02127 19.443% Co-Owner
Maureen Curry 11 O Street #2 South Boston, MA 02127 19.443% Co-Owner

Heirs of Margaret Bourdon Currently Unascertained, Unascertained 16.665% Co-Owner
Gail Wick Parts Unknown 5.562% Co-Owner
With two weeks remaining in the regular season, the playoff scenarios in both the AFC and NFC are somewhat out of control. And to make it even more chaotic, most of the games in Week 16 are being played on Saturday, because Sunday is Christmas. That said, I’m going road-heavy this weekend. Might sound crazy at first, but if I put myself in the shoes of a player on Christmas weekend, I feel my focus would be greater while on the road.

Don’t judge me. Just read my picks. Here they are for Week 16:

**TENNESSEE TITANS (-4.5) over Jacksonville Jaguars**

-This game is a tale of two different seasons in the AFC South. Jacksonville is 2-12 and has lost nine straight. The Jaguars fired their head coach after Sunday’s loss in Houston. Their season is over. Meanwhile, Tennessee is 8-6 and has won four of its last five. Three of those four wins have come against Green Bay, Denver, and most recently, at Kansas City on Sunday. If the playoffs began today, the Titans would be on the outside looking in. But they are basically tied with Houston for first place in the division. The Texans would get in because of the head-to-head in the division. The Texans would be on the outside looking in. But they are basically tied with Houston for first place in the division. The Titans can’t wait for the season to be over. Titans go into Jacksonville and win by 10.

**MINNESOTA VIKINGS (+7) over Green Bay Packers**

-I admit, this is a balsy pick. Because the Packers are one of the hottest teams in the NFL, having won four straight and being right back in the playoff picture. They’re still 8-6, and the only really impressive win in those last four came at home against Seattle two weeks ago, in awful, icy conditions. It might not be any warmer for Minnesota this weekend at Lambeau, and even though the 7-7 Vikings just got whooped by the Colts, they still have a chance to make the playoffs. Maybe they don’t win on Saturday. But the Vikings definitely have a chance to cover in what I expect to be a close game with a playoff atmosphere.

**OAKLAND RAIDERS (-4) over Indianapolis Colts**

-The Oakland Raiders clinched a playoff berth with a win over the San Diego Chargers on Sunday. But they still haven’t clinched the division, which means they still haven’t clinched a first-round bye. At 11-3, Oakland is currently the No. 2 seed in the AFC. But the 10-4 Kansas City Chiefs are still very much alive in the AFC West race. For that reason, Oakland needs to keep its foot on the gas. If that happens, and I expect it will, then the Raiders should have no problem throwing on an Indianapolis Colts pass defense that ranks 27th in the NFL, allowing 261 pass yards per game. Problem is, Oakland’s pass defense isn’t much better. And at 7-7, the Colts are mathematically still alive and playing inspired football as well, coming off a 34-6 win in Minnesota. But this is my only home team of the week. Raiders need the first-round bye and a home playoff game. Oakland by a touchdown.

**TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS (+3) over New Orleans Saints**

-If the playoffs began today, both the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and New Orleans Saints would not get in. Both are still mathematically alive, but it’s Tampa Bay that has the best chance to make it into the tournament. At 8-6, you could make the argument that the Buccaneers are one of the best teams in the NFL. They won five straight before losing a tight one in Dallas on Sunday night. The Buccaneers have stood their ground against some of the heaviest hitters in the league, making them no joke. They have beaten Atlanta, Kansas City, and Seattle, to name a few. They also just beat the Saints two weeks ago, 16-11 in Tampa Bay. New Orleans is better at home, but the Buccaneers are 5-2 on the road. They’ll need help, but the Buccaneers still have a chance to win the division. I expect them to win on the road in New Orleans.

**BALTIMORE RAVENS (+5) over Pittsburgh Steelers**

-This is one of two games being played on Christmas Sunday. It’s a 4:30 p.m. kickoff in Pittsburgh. And the AFC North is on the line. At 9-5, Pittsburgh has won five straight. If the playoffs began today, the Steelers would be the No. 3 seed in the AFC. The 8-6 Baltimore Ravens wouldn’t get in, but they still have a shot. If Baltimore can go into Pittsburgh and win on Sunday, it will own the head-to-head tiebreaker, because the Ravens have already beaten the Steelers once this season. So this is a must-win for Baltimore. The Steelers could realistically get in even if they lose this one. Still, this will be a playoff game. But I’m loving the points here. Ravens all day.

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