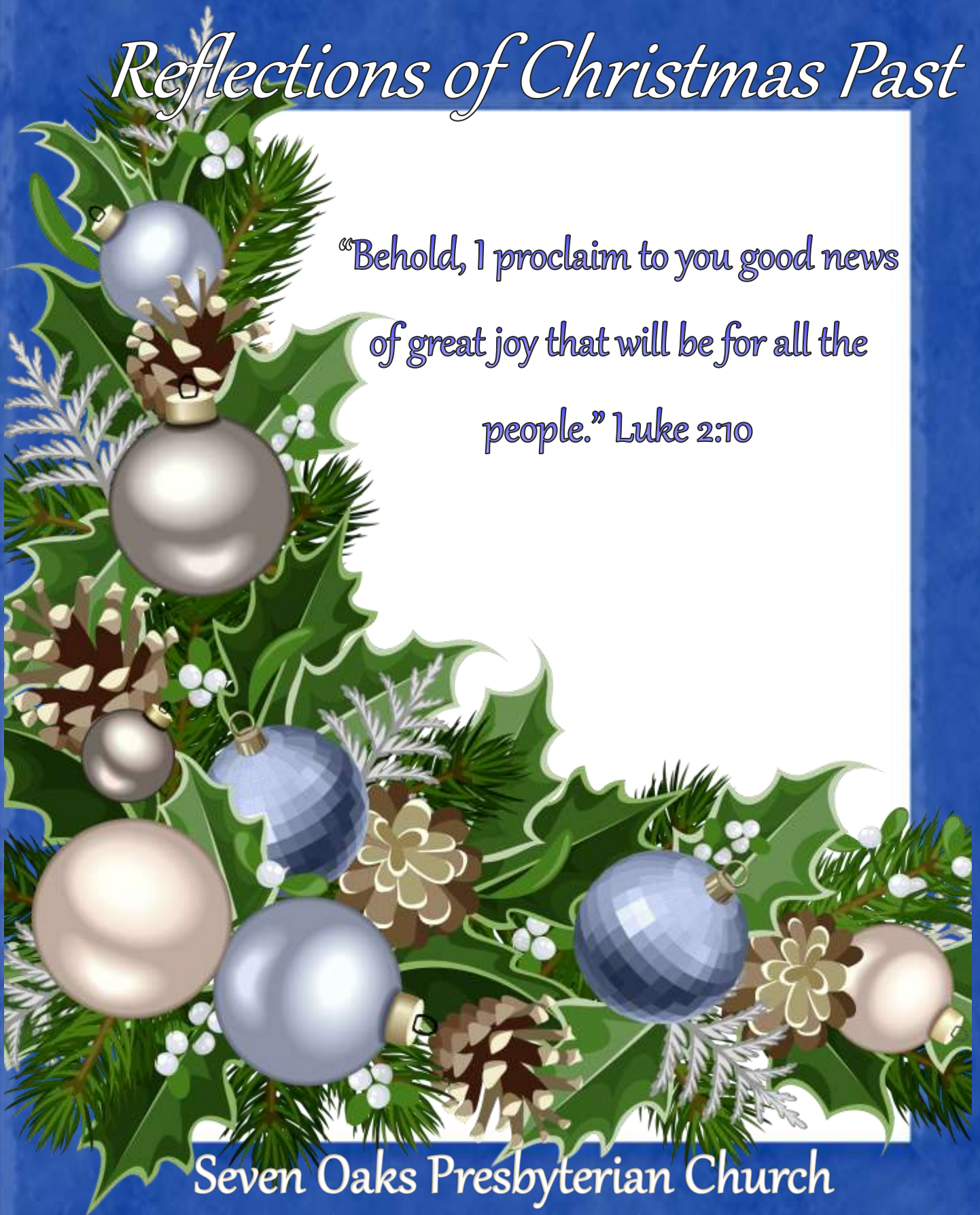


# *Reflections of Christmas Past*

*“Behold, I proclaim to you good news  
of great joy that will be for all the  
people.” Luke 2:10*

*Seven Oaks Presbyterian Church  
Advent Devotional-2023*





## Reflections of Christmas Past

Part of the history of Seven Oaks Presbyterian Church is the Christmas Advent Devotional Booklets. Over many years our own Pat Robosky crafted and labored in love over the writing, development, and implementation of this annual booklet. This year we have endeavored to bring back some tried-and-true favorites from history.

The following reflections were lovingly selected and are intended to reflect Christ's love on the history of our friends, church family, traditions, and the gift of Christmas in our lives. My personal hope is that you find within these pages both an image of Christmas past, the life of Christmas present and a hope for Christmas future here at SOPC.

May you be immersed each day in the love of Christ as we await anew the birth at the manger of our Savior. May you be wrapped in the swaddling presence of our Christ as we approach Christmas Day. May you rejoice in the music of the season that emanates through these words and images of Christmas, and become like King David, dancing in the streets as you are filled with the love for and with all of God's people. And finally, may you remember with fondness the care and devotion we as a church have put into the reason for the season, the Christ child in our lives.

Thank you for all the hands that worked on this booklet and those of years past. May these reflections of the past be a glimpse of glory into the future.

Happy Advent and soon to be Merry Christmas!

*Pastor Jana*



# ADVENT

December 3, 2023 - December 24, 2023

Seven Oaks Presbyterian Church has prepared this Advent Devotional booklet to help you prepare to celebrate the birthday of Christ our Lord. Our contributors have shared how their faith has grown and been enhanced during this season of preparation.

Advent booklets are traditionally written by organizations, pastors and committees. We hope you will be pleased to note that, once again, ours is written by our past volunteers from our congregation. We thank each of our contributors for their insights, for sharing their own special faith, and for the time they have devoted to this mission.

Seven Oaks Presbyterian Church is pleased to present this 2023 Advent Devotional of Christmas Faith to our members and friends.

## ***A NOTE FROM PAT ROBOSKY***

I loved working on the Advent Devotional through the years. It was fun - and sometimes stressful -going from original concept each year to our finished product. Picking out just the right piece of clip art for each article and writing the additional fill-ins for the booklet (many in the form of a Christmas Tree) was a challenge. When I worked on the booklet through the previous years, it was a work of devotion, creativity, and love. I have been blessed to have had a huge part in the publication series by Seven Oaks Presbyterian Church. Thank you.

*J. Patricia (Pat) Robosky*



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## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Saturday	December 2, 2023 12:00 pm – 3:00pm	Advent Adventure
Sunday	December 3, 2023 - 1st Week of Advent—Hanging of the Greens 9:45 am 11:00 am 12:00 pm 5:30 pm	Sunday School Worship Service First Sunday Fellowship Luncheon Youth Christmas Party at the Bussells'
Thursday	December 7, 2023 6:30 pm	Fellowship Sunday School Class Christmas Party at Carol Griffith's Home
Sunday	December 10, 2023 - 2nd Week of Advent 9:45 am 11:00 am	Sunday School Worship Service
Tuesday	December 12, 2023 12:30 pm	Rachel Circle Christmas Luncheon at Miyo's
Sunday	December 17, 2023 - 3rd Week of Advent 9:45 am 11:00 am 6:00 pm	Sunday School Worship Service Prime Rib Dinner
Sunday	December 24, 2023 - 4th Week of Advent 9:45 am 11:00 am  5:30 pm	Sunday School Worship Service Joy Offering Christmas Eve Worship Service

Merry Christmas!!



## 2023 CONTRIBUTORS

SUNDAY	DECEMBER 3	FRANKLIN FANT	6
MONDAY	DECEMBER 4	DONNA MOORE	7
TUESDAY	DECEMBER 5	PAT ROBOSKY	8
WEDNESDAY	DECEMBER 6	FAITHFUL FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP	9
THURSDAY	DECEMBER 7	JANICE HOLBROOK	10
FRIDAY	DECEMBER 8	ROBERT MILLER	11
SATURDAY	DECEMBER 9	ALICE ODELL	12
SUNDAY	DECEMBER 10	SHELAGH WIRTH	13
MONDAY	DECEMBER 11	LLOYD PILKINGTON	14
TUESDAY	DECEMBER 12	MARK DILLARD	15-16
WEDNESDAY	DECEMBER 13	VERN & ALENE ROGERS	17
THURSDAY	DECEMBER 14	TARA WHITFIELD	18
FRIDAY	DECEMBER 15	GUY SAN FRATELLO & JUDY BARNES	19
SATURDAY	DECEMBER 16	POLLY ROBINSON	20
SUNDAY	DECEMBER 17	SUE KESTERSON	21
MONDAY	DECEMBER 18	ED KEELEN	22
TUESDAY	DECEMBER 19	ELIZABETH TAYLOR	23
WEDNESDAY	DECEMBER 20	JIM WILHIDE	24-25
THURSDAY	DECEMBER 21	MOLLY JACKSON	26
FRIDAY	DECEMBER 22	KITSIE MILLER	27
SATURDAY	DECEMBER 23	SHARON WATKINS	28
SUNDAY	DECEMBER 24	KATHY MORGANELLI	29
MONDAY	DECEMBER 25	VIRGINIA MARTINEZ	30



*"For nothing will be impossible with God"*  
Luke 1:37

Mary is astonished when the angel Gabriel informs her that she will conceive and bear a son. "How can this be," she asks, "since I am a virgin?" Mary is perplexed by the conflict between "the facts" as she understands them and the promises of God. Mary is not the only woman in the Bible to bear a child in what seemed to be impossible circumstances. Sarah, Abraham's wife, was old and childless. Yet, in fulfillment of God's promise, Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Rachel was grieved that she bore Jacob no children. But God remembered Rachel, and she gave birth to Joseph. Vexed over her childlessness, Hannah prayed and asked God for a son. The Lord heard her prayer, and she gave birth to the prophet and judge, Samuel. Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah were old and without children. But God promised Zechariah that Elizabeth would bear a son, and she gave birth to John the Baptist. Giving so-called "barren women" the children they long for, seems to be one of God's favorite "surprises" in Scripture!

God's miraculous work in the lives of these Old Testament saints foreshadows the even more astonishing work of God that causes Mary to conceive Jesus Christ. When Mary asks Gabriel, "How can this be," he speaks mysteriously of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High, but he sums it all up by saying, "For nothing will be impossible with God."

Sometimes our lives seem barren. We may seem to miss out on the joys that come so easily to others. We may seem to have more than our share of pain and suffering. The world around us can also seem desolate and bleak, as we follow news stories of war, violence, disease, and injustice. We hear the promises of God at worship and in Scripture, and they sound wonderful. But they can also seem so at odds with our lives or the world around us, that we find ourselves asking, "How can this be?"



Advent is a time when we remember that with God, nothing is impossible. The so-called "facts" we observe about our lives and the world are one thing, but the power of God is truly something else. 2000 years ago, the Son of God took on human flesh from a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit. In his living, dying, and rising, he showed us that God's love is more powerful than death and suffering. Indeed, Christ has promised to come again, and is making all things new even now (Revelation 21:5, 22:20). Trusting the promises of God, we have real hope that we, and the world around us, are being made new.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, take the barren regions of my life and make them bear fruit by your transforming, creative power. I trust you to bless me. Keep me ever mindful that with you, nothing is impossible. Amen.

*Franklin Fant*  
*November 30, 2014*



*"For nothing will be impossible with God."*

Luke 1:37

I am reminded daily that I (and all of us) am created in God's image. We are not here by accident. The Bible tells us in Psalm 139:13 that *"we were knit together in our mother's womb"*. God planned us long before we came into being. He knows everything about us, even down to the number of hairs on our head (Matthew 10:30). We have already been given the image of the one to emulate.

God has key positions for all of us within His divine purpose. Some of us may have spent a lifetime chasing after dreams that are impossible because we failed to believe our creator has better plans for us. Dream Big! What we may see as impossible, God sees as possible.

In the Bible, there are over 7,000 promises from God. These are God's promises to us in all areas of our lives. In times of happiness, sadness, joy, anger, loneliness, financial difficulty, or wondering what our future may hold for us, why do we tend to turn away from God instead of turning towards Him? God knows us better than anyone and wants to share in every aspect of our lives. Turn to the One who created you in His image. To achieve all that God has given us the opportunity to do, we must be willing and ready to meet the challenges. God tells us, "Nothing is impossible".



I think of Elizabeth, known as "the barren one", who wanted a child all of her life, but never could conceive. She and Zachariah were faithful to God and obedient to Him. Then, when Elizabeth and Zachariah were up in years, the angel Gabriel appeared to Zachariah and told him Elizabeth would conceive and have a child. Because he did not believe the message, Gabriel told Zachariah he would not be able to speak until these things took place. The angel said these things will be fulfilled in their proper time. In Luke 1:25, Elizabeth says, *"God has shown his favor and will take away my disgrace among people."*

I think the key point here to think about is that God already knew what was in Elizabeth's heart and had obedience from both of them, but wanted them to believe it was possible. We also must remind ourselves that because something does not happen exactly when we want it to, it does not mean it is impossible. It is all in God's great

timing. 272 times in the Bible, the word "Believe" is used. God not only wants us to read his promises, but we must put our faith into action and believe them.

In the same way, an angel appeared to Mary and told her she would conceive and give birth to a son and he shall be called Jesus. Like Mary, our response should not be with skepticism, laughter or doubt but with a willing spirit.

Let us remember that reading God's promises is important, but as Mary did, and as it happened for Elizabeth, let us also believe. The American Standard Version says it this way. *"For no word from God shall be void of POWER."*

Prayer: Most Gracious and loving God, creator of all things, you have given us the perfect example to live by in life. You are all knowing and have the perfect plan for all of us. In reading your word, help me to remember the image of the one who created me. Take all doubt from me and help me to accept that you want the very best for me. I pray for a willing spirit to believe and accept with open arms the generous opportunities you bring forth to me on a daily basis. I believe, Lord. Help my unbelief.

*Donna Moore  
December 14, 2015*

*December 5 - Tuesday*



*“Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.”  
Psalm 33:3*

Becoming a mother was one of the greatest gifts and blessings God has ever bestowed on me. And not only the first time, but the second time was just as miraculous and heart-stretching as the first. Suddenly, I was charged with caring for, nourishing, loving, and bringing up this God given infant.

As earth-shaking as the births of my two precious sons were, I realize that millions of mothers, the world over, must have these same feelings. Here was a baby, created by God as my husband and I came together. Here was a baby, made in the image of God. Here was a baby whose whole future lay before him – a future I knew very little about. I could dream about his future, I could make plans for his future, I could do all in my human power to protect, teach, and guide him so his future might be bright, stable, and happy. As I held this tiny infant in my loving arms, thanking God for letting me give birth to this son, and kissing his baby-soft cheek, I could only hope, pray, and wonder.



Before the Christmas Hymn “Mary Did You Know?” was published, I had many favorite hymns. I’m not sure I could have picked just one. Now, I find it hard to believe that, for me, any song or hymn will ever surpass, “Mary Did You Know?”

Mary knew her son was the Son of God. She was told that he would be great and there would be no end to his Kingdom. Mary knew that she held something super precious. But she had not been given the knowledge of all the steps in his future. She had not been told of what his childhood would look like. She had not been told of the individual miracles he would perform or of the pride and the heartache she would experience during his relatively short life.

Mary had a baby. She held that baby, and loved that baby, and kissed that baby, and wondered about his future – just as all mothers do.

Most of our Christmas Hymns are written either from the perspective of those awaiting, anticipating, and preparing for the birth of Jesus, or they are written from the observations and experiences of those who have heard of the birth of the baby Jesus. These hymns usually tell the story of the birth and are joyful and celebratory. But, until Clay Aiken wrote the lyrics to “Mary Did You Know?”, I never felt as if I was right there, seeing Mary hold her baby and, perhaps, being able to talk with her. It touches me deeply.

Prayer: Dearest Lord Jesus, your mother, Mary, loved you so much. As you bestow even greater love on all of humanity, please guide us to share your love with all we meet. Amen

*Pat Robosky  
December 16, 2017*



*December 6 - Wednesday*



Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem because it was the law. They couldn't find anywhere to stay so they made a bed in a barn. The bed was called a manger. Mary had a baby and God put a star, a bright star like a birthday candle, in the sky. The wise men from far away found the star and followed it. They took presents to the baby like gold and myrrh and frankincense, but nobody knew what the baby was going to do with these gifts. In pictures, movies and cards, the gifts were wrapped in things that look like teapots. The wise men's boss wanted them to tell him about the baby, but they wouldn't. They wouldn't even tell their boss his name was Jesus.

The shepherds also found the star. They didn't know what it meant, so God sent angels to tell them that it meant he wanted everyone to get along and love one another. The shepherds went to see the baby so God would know they believed the angels.

The best people in the story were the wise men because they started giving Christmas gifts and the angels because they could fly around.

**OUR CHRISTMAS PRAYER**  
(4K – 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Children - December 6, 2014)



Dear God,

Thank you for Mary and Joseph. They were good parents to Jesus. Thank you for giving me good parents. Thank you for the star in the sky at Christmas. It showed the way to Jesus. The shepherds followed the star and they saw baby Jesus. Mary and Joseph were taking care of him. Every night we can look up at the sky and see stars. We can think of Jesus and how his parents took care of him. We can think about how our parents take care of us and how God takes care of everybody. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



“Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth”. Psalm 46:10

As I looked over the guidelines and suggested Scriptures for writing a devotional for the Advent booklet, this verse resonated with me. But why, I asked myself? This verse says absolutely nothing about the Christmas story.

The Advent/Christmas season is not conducive to being still. There’s decorating to be done, gifts to purchase, church services to rehearse for or attend, family dinners to prepare, parties for the office/ social groups/neighborhood to attend, charities to donate to, school events, concerts and ballets to attend, etc., etc. WHO HAS TIME TO BE STILL??

So, what does “be still” mean, I wondered? I googled the definition of “still”. As a noun, the word means “deep silence and calm”. As an adjective, it means “not moving or making a sound”.

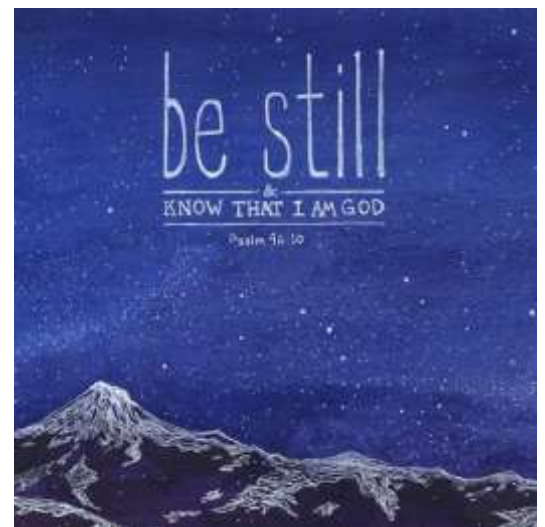
I tried to think of times I might have experienced stillness. I remembered the stillness outside the church at midnight on Christmas Eve when we lived in Michigan. Snow would have fallen, and not a sound could be heard. I remembered how still it was in the middle of the night as I rocked one of my babies. I recalled how still the house was recently when the power went out for over an hour.

At the church retreat in September, 2014, I learned to be still during the sitting yoga class. I listened as Ed Keelen taught us about Centering Prayer at the same retreat. In Centering Prayer we have silent time with God, letting our thoughts go and being present in the moment. We let go of our busyness and have silent communion with God.

As I continued to consider this verse, I realized that “being still” was not an optional request from God, but a command from God. He did not say “if you have a few moments, please sit down and be still”. God said, “Be still, and know that I am God”. Just like our relationships with family and friends, knowing God requires that we spend time with Him. How well we know God, depends on how much time we spend with Him. We must take the time to “be still”. We must learn to “be still”. Nothing on the to-do list is more important than time spent learning to know that He is God.

The Psalm further says when we know that He is God, He will be exalted among the nations, He will be exalted in the earth. Exalt means to elevate, glorify, praise, honor. The Westminster Catechism says that “man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever”. We must spend time with God in order to exalt Him.

God gave us His Son, the greatest gift we can ever receive. Let’s spend time with God this Advent season and always.



Janice Holbrook  
December 14, 2014

*December 8 - Friday*



“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” - Galatians 6:2

Prior to sitting down to write this, I had a subject in mind but was unsure how to present it. The above verse captures exactly what I would like to relate to my fellow members of Seven Oaks Presbyterian Church.

Throughout the year, the church sponsors many events which reach out to the children and families in this immediate area. Some of these programs are reduced cost or free tuition at the SOPC Preschool, spring and fall fun/learning events for the children in the neighborhood, and a variety of weekly events for various age groups. There is a continuing support to the Seven Oaks Elementary School with a Teacher Appreciation Breakfast, the supply of school materials, and with the Reading Buddies and Mentor Programs which help develop children’s reading and social skills. Seven Oaks Elementary School has the highest rate of children receiving free or reduced cost meals in the Richland Lexington 5 School District. This number is approximately 75% of the children enrolled at the school. Yes that’s correct, 75% is a very difficult statistic to imagine happening right here in our own neighborhood.

The nutritional needs of these children are satisfied 5 days per week at the school with breakfasts, lunches and after school snacks. But, during the weekend, many of these children are left alone at home with nothing to eat. Due to the generosity and caring of SOPC’s support of what is called the “Snack Pack Program”, a bag of 15 child friendly, easily prepared, food items is sent home each Friday with a number of the most needy children. Currently there are 24 children receiving these weekly food bags, but last year this number rose to about 45 by the end of the year. These children have been identified by their teachers or the Guidance Counselor as coming to school hungry each Monday morning. Not only does this augment or fulfill their dietary needs for the weekend, but it helps reduce illness and Monday morning visits to the School Nurse, as it provides them with a basis on which to concentrate and learn. As you can imagine, it’s hard to listen to the teacher and concentrate on learning, if the growling from your stomach is louder than her voice. Subconsciously, it may even occur to them that somebody cares enough about them to provide this food package each weekend. This is good for their self esteem.

On several occasions at the local food drives to help support this program, I have been approached by people in their early 20’s donating a grocery cart full of food with a statement like “When I was in high school this program supplied all I had to eat on the weekend and now I’ve got a job so I can give back a little”. Those people are truly living the opening Bible verse above.

SOPC is a generous and caring congregation of people who always demonstrate compassion for those in need of assistance. The support of Seven Oaks Elementary School, and specifically the Snack Pack Program, is just one of the many ways that the members of SOPC are living this verse by “Bearing one another’s burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ”.



*Robert Miller  
December 19, 2014*

## December 9 - Saturday



*“See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight - indeed, he is coming says the Lord of Hosts.”*

Malachi 3:1

The title of our Advent Devotional this year, “Prepare the Way”, reminded me that we have to prepare the way for just about anything we do. We have to prepare the soil before we can have a garden. We have to do a lot of planning and preparation before we can have a big holiday meal. We have to prepare the way before we start back to school in the fall, before we begin a new job, even before we get married; there is so much planning and preparation.

At both ends of life, there is much preparation. We prepare for a new baby by having showers of gifts where friends celebrate the coming of the new little one. We prepare by painting the nursery, putting the crib together, washing all the clothes and then, the waiting for labor pains begins. In death, especially with long term illnesses, we try to set our affairs straight, we may even begin giving away our prized possessions to loved ones so that we know they will have a remembrance. We tell our loved ones how much we love them, and we begin to make amends with those we have hurt.

The prophet Malachi, along with Isaiah, tells us of the coming of the Messiah long before we hear of the Christ Child’s birth. The messenger is preparing the way by telling of the One to come. He sends John the Baptist to prepare the way; to warn and to build anticipation of the One who is coming.

This message is as appropriate for us today as it was for the people who walked the earth with Jesus. We are to prepare the way for the coming of the Christ Child, the anointed One. During this busy season when we are filling our time with parties, shopping, decorating and baking, take time to sit and listen. Pray and meditate on the story.



Think how it must have felt to be Elizabeth at her age, having a baby. Think about Mary and her conversation with Gabriel. Remember Joseph who so totally wanted to do the right thing. How he must have felt so very left out. Think of the shepherds hearing of the birth from an angel - and all that brightness! Scripture says the glory of the Lord shown all around them.

Meditate on these people and their thoughts and how it must have felt to be part of this great miracle. Let us put the miracle back in the coming days before our Savior was born. May we be like Mary and ponder all these things in our hearts.

Prayer: Dear God, our heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your heavenly Son. Let his light shine upon us and in our hearts this season. Guide us to be your heavenly light for others who have yet to know the amazing story of the Messiah. Help us to prepare the way for his coming so all may have the joy that knowing Christ brings to us. Amen

Alice Odell

December 2, 2015



*“So Joseph (and Mary) also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.” Luke 2:4*

What do you think of when you hear “Prepare the Way?” For me, I think of Mary and Joseph so long ago, riding and walking on that long road to Bethlehem to prepare for the census that had been ordered.

Can you imagine! Pregnant and riding a donkey!! Heck I didn't even want to get in and out of the car when my children were being born.

“Prepare the Way” says to me – get ready, something is going to happen. What more wonderful and exciting event could happen than the birth of Jesus? A baby, so innocent, so beautiful, such a miracle!!! But this baby was even more special than any other baby. He was to become a living, breathing example of the best there was.

The Miracle of Christmas. It doesn't matter to me if Jesus was born in December or in July. The important thing to remember is what it means to celebrate the ‘Miracle of Christmas’: kindness, treating others with love, being there when you are needed for family, for friends, and YES, even for strangers.

The Miracle of Christmas - not judging others. The Miracle of Christmas - having a meal with strangers. The Miracle of Christmas – all year long.

I once saw the following in a magazine. I have used these lines many times since that day and I try to remember them daily. Prepare the Way:



*God won't ask the square footage of your house; He'll ask how many people you welcomed into your home.*

*God won't ask about the clothes you had in your closet; He'll ask how many you helped to clothe.*

*God won't ask what kind of car you drive; He'll ask how many people you drove that didn't have transportation.*

*God won't ask what your highest salary was; He'll ask if you compromised your character to get it?*

*God won't ask how many friends you had; He'll ask how many people to whom you were a friend.*

*God won't ask about the color of your skin; He'll ask about the content of your character.*

*God won't ask why it took you so long to seek salvation; He'll lovingly take you to your mansion in heaven; and not to the gates of hell.*

Will you “Prepare the Way” for the Miracle of Christmas in your life?

Prayer: Thank you Jesus for showing us the way. Keep us focused on You as this most happy time of the year approaches. Help us to be mindful of those who have nothing, those who have little, and those who need You as we do. Help us to keep the Miracle of Christmas and prepare the way, so that we may live in Your way and be pleasing in Your sight. Amen.

Shelagh Wirth  
December 3, 2015

December 11 - Monday



*“But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers.”*

James 1:22

My celebration of Christmas includes countless traditions, many of which I have tried to pass on to my family. Out of all those traditions, *making* music during this sacred season is the thing that brings my faith to the front and center of my life, and makes the experience of Christ’s coming the most real. Yes, I love hearing holiday songs fill the aisles in stores where I shop and Christmas carols echo through the air. But hearing songs and making music are two quite different things.

For me, Christmas isn’t just about hearing, it’s about doing. This season we celebrate God’s act of unfathomable love shown in sending His only Son to us. God gave us the greatest gift that could ever be given. God’s action transformed the world, changed the trajectory of human history, and the course of my life.

God’s action was followed by the life changing steps Mary took. She opened her heart, received God’s message in faith, and then did everything she was asked to do. Joseph too, did what God asked of him. They both must have faced endless questions and shameful accusations. But they were faithful, choosing to go God’s way and doing what God called them to do.

Then came that silent and holy night in Bethlehem. Jesus arrived in a humble stall. With his birth, angels sprang into action, announcing the Savior’s birth across the hills surrounding Bethlehem. Shepherds, hearing that heavenly chorus, didn’t sit still either. They ran to see this newborn child. Later, Wisemen came from the east, journeying with nothing but a star to guide them. They came honoring the Christ Child with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

So, I want to jump into action too. I don’t want to just be a hearer of the word, I want to be a doer. I want to act, just like Mary, Joseph, the angels, shepherds and Wisemen did.



Making music is one way I can act. I can sing, ring and play tunes proclaiming with the angels, “Gloria in excelsis Deo”. I can sound songs telling the world there really is **joy**, because the Lord has come. I can make melodies pointing hearts to the manger, and giving voice to my praise and adoration of the Christ Child. Making music helps me be more than a hearer of the word, it propels me to be a doer.

God has given each one of us something we can do in this season as an act of loving response to the great gift we have received. Perhaps we can begin by doing as the shepherds did.

“O come, let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him.  
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.”

Prayer:

Lord, I pray that as we listen to the Word proclaimed through readings, sermons and song, we would all respond by stepping forward in faith, as hearers of the word and as doers! Amen

Lloyd Pilkington  
December 16, 2018



*“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel – which means, “God with us.”*

Matthew 1:23



Matthew’s story of the birth of Jesus is astonishing. First there is the engagement of Mary and Joseph, then Mary is with child, which sets Joseph on his heels and puts him in a no-win situation. He must make a difficult decision which could have no favorable outcome.

Then God sends an angel to explain this miracle to Joseph. The message of the angel, along with Joseph’s faith in God, sets Joseph at ease. As the story unfolds, all is well with Joseph.

The angel declared to Joseph that Mary’s child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and would be a son, revealing an important truth about Jesus – He is both God and human, taking on the limitations of humanity so He could live and die for the salvation of all who would believe in Him.

Joseph, as Jesus’ earthly father did - as the fathers of today do – trained Jesus in the trade of carpentry, made sure Jesus had good spiritual training in Nazareth, and took the whole family on a yearly trip to Jerusalem for the Passover.



Advent is the season each year that helps to renew our faith in Christ’s birth and our salvation. May the joyful excitement of this advent season revitalize our awareness of our faith and trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Prayer: Thank You, God, for sending Your Son, Jesus, to live amongst us, giving us the faith and hope as was given to Joseph. Amen.

Vern & Alene Rogers  
December 11, 2015

December 13 - Wednesday



*“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined.”*

-- Isaiah 9:2

How do *you* get into the Christmas spirit? What does that phrase mean to you? For many of us, the answer has changed as we’ve grown and matured over the decades.

**Childhood.** “Better be good, boys. Santa Claus is coming!” We can focus our children on a simple version of the Christmas story, but chances are that visions of toys and Santa will still dance in their heads. At least that warning puts some emphasis on *being good* during this sacred season. For the Dillard boys, the admonition actually worked. We were sometimes good for as much as three hours on Christmas Eve.



**Junior High.** I liked to read *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens every year during the holiday break from school. (OK, actually it was a condensed children’s version.)

The classic story of Ebenezer Scrooge always put me in a Christmas mood and inspired me to be a better person. My 8th-grader’s image of a better person was an affable, good-natured fellow with a twinkle in his eye like the reformed Mr. Scrooge. The type who generously bought huge turkeys for poor families.

**Adulthood.** One good way to prepare for Christmas is to reread Luke’s familiar account of the birth of Jesus. Luke tells the beloved story in 20 short verses in Chapter Two.

The King James Version is still the favorite for many. You’ll have to agree that “...*on earth peace, good will toward men*” has a better ring to it than “...*on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.*” For those who grew up with them, phrases like “*shepherds abiding in the field*” and “*Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger*” have a real resonance.





**A Few Years Ago.** It occurred to me several years ago that re-reading the story in Luke gave me the same good feeling as listening to that song “Christmas in Dixie.” Both Luke and the record lyrics somehow made me imagine a warm, clear, peaceful night just like you might find in the South, even in December.

Is the fact that a person’s feelings about Christmas could be summarized in a country music song, a sign that they needed to think a little more deeply?

**Now.** We’ve heard it all our lives. We know it intellectually, but take it all for granted. Christmas profoundly changed our understanding of God, the world, and our role in it! Before Christmas, God was a revered but remote figure for many people. Because of Christmas, the world can see, through Christ, what God is like. That he is kind. He shares and understands our emotions. He cares for us and loves us.

Time with family and friends can be a great holiday tradition. Remembering all the things that took place in Bethlehem that night is important. But what is the best way to get ready for Christmas, to prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ? Perhaps it is to look at the birth of Jesus with fresh eyes, as if we were just realizing for the first time how profoundly that event has changed our lives. Then we can ponder how that knowledge should impact the way we live each day, how we treat others and how much time we devote to God. And perhaps, most of all, to be grateful for God’s precious gift.

*Mark Dillard  
December 9, 2015*



Prayer: Father, please be patient with us as we enjoy the superficial trappings of the Christmas season. But, more importantly, help us to think deeply and consider prayerfully the miracle and meaning of the birth of your Son. Help us to carry this understanding in our minds and hearts throughout the year so it will be reflected in our treatment of others, in our obedience to your word, and in joyful, positive living of each day.  
Amen.

*December 14 - Thursday*



*"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"*

2 Corinthians 9:15

"Christmas Faith" is the Advent topic this year. What brings my faith alive or renews my faith each Christmas? As I think about this and reflect on Christmases past, I see my Christian faith as a journey, not as a single thing or a group of things that renews my faith each year, but a growth in faith.

As a child, Christmas was all about me, or so I thought! Everything was so beautiful. Our family Christmas tree was wrapped in colored lights and tinsel that draped perfectly on each tree branch. Mother saw to that! There were bright red bows everywhere and pretty wrapped gifts under the tree. Dad and I loved shaking each gift as we guessed what might be inside. The excitement would build until Christmas morning when my sister, brother, and I would finally see what Santa Clause had brought. He never seemed to disappoint!

As a young adult, Christmas became more about friends. Our Christmas Eve gatherings for a meal and time together was, and is, always filled with conversation and laughter. This tradition has lasted many years, making this year's Christmas Eve number 48 with these good friends. I give thanks for each of them, as they are a gift from God.

Then, as an adult with children of my own, Christmas became about bringing happiness and joy to their beautiful little faces. We put up decorations and, often times, more than one tree, as we tried to capture the magic of the holiday season. I did everything I could to make sure their requested gifts were waiting on Christmas morning for their pleasure. Then it was off to visit their grandparents to share a traditional Christmas meal and to have time together.



Now my children are grown and I celebrate the season differently. I try to listen to the Holy Spirit and take direction from Him. It's still about giving, but with the focus on others. Sometimes it's sending a toy to a child that I will never meet, in a place I will never go. Sometimes it's a visit to a nursing home where so many are so lonely. Other times it might be a gift to a man recovering from drug or alcohol abuse who is longing to turn his life around. There are times when it's a meal for someone away from home, forgotten by family and friends. In other words, being a servant, the heart and hands of Jesus. I now find meaning in Christmas by remembering the poor, the lonely, and the forgotten.

So as my faith grows, I look outward and realize it is not about me and never was. I don't see any one thing that renews my faith at Christmas, but Christmas and its true meaning allows my faith to grow.

Prayer:

As we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, may our eyes and hearts be opened to the needs of others. For without the baby Jesus, and His life lived to glorify His Father, where would we be? Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! Amen

Merry Christmas!  
Tara Whitfield  
December 18, 2018

*December 15 – Friday*



## THE SIMPLICITY OF CHRISTMAS

*“This is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”  
Isaiah 25:9*

The theme of Christmas from year to year is simple and straight forward for those of us who know and understand the true meaning of Christmas. For those who are just learning about the meaning of Christmas it becomes quite exciting and celebratory just like it has been for us for many years. For the most part, even those who don't believe in Jesus' birth, they do feel the peace and happiness that abounds this time of year. The memories and experiences of being with family and friends, the traditions of decorating, eating delicious special foods, gift giving and traveling remain with us and we look forward to this special time.

It is beginning to look a lot like Christmas everywhere you go (possible song lyric?) beginning in late October around Halloween! We start hearing Christmas music in late November. There are a series of movies on the Hallmark Station, plays at various venues, and music on the radio.



They all tell similar stories. The product is the same. It is entertainment that tells of the story of kindness, understanding, comfort, serenity and love. It makes us feel good and appreciate the blessings that God has so graciously bestowed on us through His son Jesus and renews our faith in mankind.

So why can't we hold on to these feelings of peace and love toward others? Why does the weight of the world bring us back to reality so quickly after Christmas? Why do we only love and practice true tolerance once a year? The greatest gift ever given was the Son of God! Jesus came to this earth for each and everyone of us. He practiced love, forgiveness, joy with everyone and then He gave us the greatest gift, His life so we would all be with Him and His father for eternity! This gift is the renewal of faith and love each year. This year let's hold on to this gift and share this gift longer than just at Christmas.

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for the tremendous opportunity Christmas gives to share Your good news.

Merry Christmas!

Love,

*Judy Barnes & Guy San Fratello*

*December 17, 2018*



*December 16 – Saturday*



*“The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.”*  
Isaiah 11:6

I have always heard this verse and seen what a picture of peace would look like. But it's the little child that leads. I spend a lot of time with children and have seen how their innocence affects their view of the world. Children will accept others without question until we teach them otherwise.

If we were all children again, we would (hopefully) accept all of God's creation as good and equal. No matter our background, religion, race, or nationality, we could be friends. That is the peace we long for in this world and look forward to in Heaven.

You have all seen the expression on the face of a child looking at a baby. It is precious! Let's celebrate the baby Jesus this year and bring back the innocence of the children. Santa is not what this season is about. Let the adults set the example of peace and Christ this season.

Prayer: Dear God, Keep us focused on Jesus. Help us to follow the little child. Let us bring your peace to our fellow brothers and sisters on Earth. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

*Polly Robinson*  
*November 29, 2016*



*December 17 – Sunday*



*“What came into existence was Life, and the Life was the Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn’t put it out.”*

John 1 The Message

One of my favorite and most meaningful Christmas memories happened every year at our church in Monroeville, PA as our family walked together to the sanctuary for Christmas Eve service. It was usually very cold, the sidewalks lined with snow but free of ice and often snow was falling. The parking lot was filled with darkness. As we got closer to the church, we saw light. The candlelight was coming from carved out plastic jugs with sand at the bottom and a large candle inside lining the pathways. As we got closer to the sanctuary, the light grew brighter, filling my heart with excitement, knowing that we were entering to welcome the Light of the World into our lives. Peace entered my soul every Christmas Eve because I knew that the coming of Christ Jesus would give light and meaning to my life for another year.

Yes, light brings us peace and reassurance – the light in a child’s eyes, the light-up and contagious smile on a friend’s face, the love light of a spouse or family member, the warmth of light from a beam of sunshine. But all of these can become dimmed or darkened at some time; however, as Christians we are assured through scripture that God’s light, which brings us comfort, hope and peace, will never be dimmed or taken from us. Thanks Be to God.

Prayer: Dear God of Light, thank you for this Advent Season, the season of lights. May we be reminded every day as we get closer to celebrating the birth of the Light of the World that we are to share your light and love residing in our hearts to bring a bit of light, hope, love, and peace into our church, our community, and the world. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

*Merry Christmas!  
Sue Kesterson  
December 13, 2021*



## December 18 – Monday



*...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

Matthew 22:37,39

There are many kinds of love in this world. When I was little, I "loved" Santa Claus. I "loved" my American Flyer model train and setting it up with my Dad. I "loved" our Christmas tree and decorating it. I "loved" our Christmas dinner meal with my cousins, Aunt Ruth and Uncle Butch, but, at the time, my love was really more for the meal than for the relationships. Of course, I also loved my parents and sister for the way they protected me and cherished me. But a more mature love, more similar to how Jesus loves us, came later.

Our God is a God of relationships. When I was little, I kind of took the love of others outside my immediate family for granted, and didn't reciprocate the way God would have wanted me to. I guess that's typical of children, they receive all kinds of love and are blessed in so many ways, but they are kind of absorbed with curiosity and playfulness in their own lives. As Jana said in a recent sermon, we would be wise to emulate a child's curiosity and creative part. But as we grow in our faith, we sense an obligation to reciprocate. We begin to appreciate what others have done for us. We realize that we can love them right back. As Jesus says in the Scripture that I chose above, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself."* It's that kind of love that seems to be most prevalent at Christmas time: thinking about that perfect gift for someone you care about; setting up the Christmas tree and helping your wife decorate it; enjoying time with the grandkids and reflecting upon what it was like to be so in awe of everything at that age; going to church and rejoicing in our Savior's birth.



Our family has a special tradition on Christmas Eve where we gather around the fireplace and eat a wonderful selection of hors 'd oeuvres and punch together, and reminisce about Christmases past. Wouldn't it be wonderful to carry that sense of love throughout the year? We can, you know. We can start by coming to church regularly and joining one of our Growth Groups. Then we can expand our horizons to serve others. Our Missions program has a variety of ways to do this. Remember that our God is a God of relationships, and we should cherish our relationships too, both inside and outside the church, with all types of people. That is Christmas love to me; that is love as it should be throughout the year.

### Prayer:

Dear Lord, Thank you for all the different ways that there are to love: children's love of playthings and playmates, and, as we grow, our love for God, each other and the church. Our God is a God of relationships and we have a ways to go before we mature in loving fully that way. May we learn to take the love we experience at Christmastime and extend it throughout the year. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Ed Keelen  
December 9, 2019

*December 19 – Tuesday*



## The Light of the World

*“The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”*

John 1:9



The custom of lighting the Christmas tree goes back to when Christmas trees were decorated with candles, symbolizing faith in Christ as the light of the world. Nothing marks the coming of the Christmas season at our house quite like lighting our tree. Over the years, we have used different sizes, shapes, and colors, but arranging the lights in just the “right way” is a job reserved for Jimmy. The lights must be wrapped from the inside out so that their glow engulfs the entire tree with light. Once this step in the decorating process is complete, the ornaments are simply the icing on the cake.

In the last year, I have begun a journey to fulfill a lifelong dream of becoming a painter. It is so easy to get lost in creating something that translates an emotion, the love of a grandchild, or the experience of a spectacular landscape. Painting has brought me a great deal of joy, though I am just a beginner. The most important lesson I have learned is that the center of focus in every painting should be bathed in the most beautiful thing that exists – light. The source of that light determines what is seen and unseen, what shadows are cast or not cast.

The glow of the Christmas tree, or the presence of light in painting, is also an underlying truth in our lives. The light is the foundation of beauty. The source of light in our lives, which was given to us with the birth of Jesus Christ, will determine what is seen by others and what shadows are cast during our time here on Earth. Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. So, if you follow me, you won’t be stumbling through darkness, for the living light will flood your path.”*

*“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like the shifting shadows.”*

James 1:17

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ, The Light of the World. May the celebration of His birth be filled with joy and light, reflecting the greatest love imaginable over all the world. Amen

*Elizabeth Taylor  
December 7, 2018*



*“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”*

Matthew 19:14

As young parents, Joan and I wanted to plan something special for our children on Christmas Eve. We wanted to do something around the Christmas tree that would focus on the birth of Christ, and would be meaningful to the children.

We were very familiar with the verse in Proverbs 22:6 which says, *“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”*

We talked with our pastor and explained what we were searching for. He told us to give him a few days and he would have something for us. Several days later, he asked us to come see him. He gave us the following service.

### **FAMILY WORSHIP CENTER**

Your Christmas tree will provide the best place to gather the family together for this service. Have a small table nearby on which is placed a Bible opened to Luke 2:7, and the stand-up manger, cow and sheep your child has brought home from Sunday School. Provide the following which will be used in the service: a red candle in a candle holder, a match, a star, and a bell on loops of string.

This service also gives you an opportunity to talk about some of the ornaments that are on the Christmas tree or to add some special ornaments such as the one Grandma and Grandpa gave you. You can also use the one(s) that the child made for the tree, a special star given to you by a member of the family, etc.





## CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICE

SING: AWAY IN A MANGER

FATHER RECITES: Christmas bells are ringing, ringing!  
Christmas bells are ringing, ringing!  
Happy Birthday, Jesus dear!  
Happy, Happy Birthday!  
(Child gets bell from table and fastens it on the Christmas tree.)



MOTHER RECITES: Christmas stars are shining, shining!  
Christmas stars are shining, shining!  
Happy Birthday, Jesus dear!  
Happy, Happy Birthday!  
(Child gets star from table and fastens it on the Christmas tree.)



FATHER RECITES: Christmas candles glowing, glowing!  
Christmas candles glowing, glowing!  
Happy Birthday, Jesus dear!  
Happy, Happy Birthday!  
(Child gets candle in holder and takes it to  
Father, who lights it and places it on the table.)



MOTHER RECITES: To God's Book, we listen, listen!  
To God's Book, we listen, listen!  
Happy Birthday, Jesus dear!  
Happy, Happy Birthday!  
(Child gets Bible from table and takes it to Father.  
While Father reads, child may be directed to watch the burning candle.)



FATHER READS: Luke 2: 7 – 11.

ALL SING: (Use familiar "Happy Birthday" tune.  
Happy Birthday to you!  
Happy Birthday to you!  
Happy Birthday, dear Jesus!  
Happy Birthday to You!



(Mother holds candle for child to blow out flame.  
Father leads family to kneel as he prays aloud.)

FATHER PRAYS: (Using his own words)

Using this service had our entire family thinking about the real reason we celebrate Christmas. We used this service with our children for many years. Happy Birthday, Jesus!

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to show us how to live. I pray that our family will be your family. Please help each of us to know, to love, and to serve Jesus. May each of us understand why we celebrate Christmas and may Jesus be our constant companion. In His name I pray. Amen.

*Jim Withide*  
December 22, 2016



*"Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill His promises to her!"*  
Luke 1:45

### MARY, YOU ARE LOVED

Most of us have known many types of love, but God's love for Mary is unique and special. The following refrains and verses have been in my head and mouth for years. I share these measures, as I feel each of us could put our own name into the tune, because each of us is also unique and special to God.

Ma ry child of God You are loved.

Verse: Mary, You are God's Creation-known from the womb - a reflection of love and life and hope

Ma ry child of God. You have been cho-sen for who you are.

Verse: Mary, you are pure, innocent, a lover of the Law, committed to your creator, a willing servant.

Ma ry mo-ther of God You are blessed.

Verse: Mary, your devotion is cherished by God - who trusted you with his Son - who fulfills your life - who reveals His glory through you and his Son.

Ma - ry Ma - ry You are Loved.

Prayer: May each of us respond to our Father with gratitude, with love for our Lord and Savior, and with service to show forth His Grace and Mercy.



Molly Jackson  
December 24, 2016

*December 22 – Friday*



We are so blessed to have so many references to the light of God in our Bible.

Matthew 4:16 tells us about *“the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”* How reassuring it is to know about God’s power over death. Death can be seen as the ultimate darkness, but we know this is just a temporary shadow that God has overcome.



Micah 7:8 warns our enemies, *“Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.”* God is warning our enemy that even if we have fallen, His light is stronger and our understanding will give us strength.

John 1:5 explains that Jesus is the light of the world. *“He is the light shining in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”* Through Jesus we attain truth, understanding and knowledge which is not acknowledged by any darkness or evil.

Jesus speaks to us further in John 8:12. *“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* And so if we follow him, we will reflect this light to others.

Oh what strength we can have through this light.

How reassuring it is to have this knowledge through God’s light to affirm our faith.

Prayer: Dear God, please help us to remember the love and knowledge and understanding the lights of Christmas represent. Please help us comprehend the meaning of the light of your love that overcomes any darkness. In the light of Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

*Kitsie Miller  
December 17, 2021*

## December 23 – Saturday



*“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,  
and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.”*

Luke 2:6-7

As much as music evokes emotion, the responsibilities of performing seem to keep my head just ahead of my heart. But there is one Christmas anthem that makes me lose my composure, whether I'm a listener or a performer. Tears rolled down my cheeks the first night I heard it, and I still react the same now. The piece is John Rutter's *Candlelight Carol*. If you have never heard it, I highly recommend finding it on YouTube.com, and listening to it this holiday season.

I first heard this amazing piece December 1993, when I was performing in a yearly community Christmas concert in Anderson, SC. There were 100+ voices singing, accompanied by a small orchestra. The glorious ensemble sang Rutter's beautiful, simple words:

*How do you capture the wind on the water?  
How do you count all the stars in the sky?  
How do you measure the love of a mother,  
Or how can you write down a baby's first cry?*

*Candlelight, angel light, firelight and star-glow,  
Shine on his cradle till breaking of dawn.  
Silent night, holy night, all is calm and all is bright,  
Angels are singing; the Christ child is born.*



And why did this touch me so? John Rutter has a gift, there is no denying. But I think it was mainly because there I sat, large and round, just a few weeks before giving birth to my own special baby. Ken and I had so wanted children, but all of our prayers and medical attempts seemed futile. I had never felt so empty. But just as we began adoption proceedings, little Will announced his presence. All parents feel the miracle of having a baby, and all mothers who are lucky enough to be pregnant during Christmas time, relate in a special way to the story of Mary. But when parenthood seems just out of reach, that “surprise” baby is a miracle beyond all others. And John Rutter was right: There is no way to adequately express a mother's love, or the awe of hearing a baby's first cry. What a gift!

Prayer: God, here at Christmas time, help our wonder at the Christ Child's birth be renewed by remembering the amazing births of our own special babies: Children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and friends. And thank you for the music that touches our hearts and expresses the otherwise inexpressible.

*Sharon Watkins  
December 6, 2017*



Christmas Love

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength...Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Mark 12:30-31

I cherish the time before the dawn, when it is clear and cool and dark; all of heaven sparkles with Christmas stars just as in the day of Jesus' birth. *"What Love the Father has lavished on us that we may be called the children of God."*

Do you feel loved? Feel loved Neighbor, for before you were born God so loved you that he sent His Son. Now, look around to the one sitting next to you. Look at the neighbor raking leaves across the street, and what about the one walking in the rain without a hat or umbrella? Do you see love? Do they feel God's love?

A Short Story – A man raked leaves in the cold rain a few days before Christmas in my neighbor's yard, while our yard was also full of leaves. We had not lived long in this house and had no yard helper. I had heard that, if you need any help, look to those helping your neighbor. My husband, Al, took the cue and went to the gentleman to ask if he could come back when it was not so late in the day and wet and cold and we would pay him to also rake our yard. He replied: *"I must do it now. I need to buy a Christmas gift for my daughter."* Those words still ring in my ear, *"I must do it now"*. In scripture it says Now is the time.



I digress, back to the story. Right before us was our neighbor who was in need and, through the love of God, we found a way to share the love of Christmas with this man. Our relationship lasted several years as Al helped him to establish a lawn service business.

Consider, Friend, who helped show you the love of Christ? After all, Christmas is all year long. Together, let us consider who helped us by giving us a hand up, a ride home, or an umbrella in the rain. Perhaps someone gave you the comfort of a small bear that can be hugged while feeling so all alone at Christmas in a Cancer ward for, after all, ...*"the greatest of these is Love"*

Prayer:

Invade us Lord. Make us Luminaries. As we give ourselves the gift of simplicity, let's lay out in the time before dawn; look at the sparkle of stars fringed by the trees and clouds that wing and sing, and let's raise our Hallelujah!

Kathy Morganelli  
December 12, 2019

*"Love, love, love, love—  
Christians, this is your call  
Love your neighbor as yourself—  
for God loves us all."  
Author Unknown*



*December 25 – Monday*



Christmas is not about gifts, parties or even Santa Claus.  
Christmas is about celebrating the birth of Jesus, the Savior of mankind.  
In His honor, I have written this poem.

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JESUS**

Happy Birthday, Dear Jesus, and we'd like to say,  
Thank you Father for this wonderful day,  
When You sent down Your Son in the form of a child  
To be born in a manger so meek and so mild.

You loved us so much that you gave us Your Son  
To die on a cross for the sins we have done.  
Happy Birthday, dear Jesus, our brother and friend,  
And we'll thank you forever for the message you send.

We thank you sweet Savior for the ones we hold dear.  
They believe in your promise, and have nothing to fear.  
For your love and salvation is setting us free  
To join you in heaven, eternally.

We promise, this Christmas, to be more like you.  
To love one another and to start life anew  
With a clean slate, and a heart full of love,  
We'll shine on forever with your light from above.

Thank you dear Father for the mercy you've shown  
For the gift of your Son and the love we have known.  
He's the light of the world, the truth and the way,

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR JESUS, ON THIS BLESSED DAY.**

Virginia Martinez  
December 25, 2018

# CHRISTMAS EVE AT SEVEN OAKS

'Twas the night before Christmas,  
When all through the town  
Everyone has been busy  
Here, just look around.

Cookies are decorated  
By both large hands and small.  
The Christmas tree's beautiful  
In the front entrance hall.

Homes shine with fresh cleaning  
And decorations galore  
There's lights in the yard,  
A wreath on the door.

Oh, look at the time,  
We must not be late.  
We're invited to church,  
I can hardly wait.

Christmas Eve is here,  
Tomorrow's the Day  
When the Christ Child  
Is born – 'tis what they say.

Approaching the church  
In the family car,  
We see through the windows  
The Moravian Star.

It calls us inside  
welcoming and bright,  
As all greet us kindly  
To this beautiful sight.

Come all ye hearers,  
Come share this with us  
God's Christmas story,  
Yes, you really must

.Please take a bulletin,  
Have a seat in a pew,  
Be you a member,  
An old friend, or new,

With Stephen at the organ,  
The music will begin.  
Sharon plays piano,  
Now a hush will descend.

The Choir has arrived,  
The Candles have been lit.  
There's Bruce at the Lectern,  
And Jana in the Pulpit

The time has finally come  
The old will become new.  
We all are now ready  
Let us share it with you.

The child whose birthday  
We've come to celebrate,  
Is your Savior, too,  
Don't even hesitate.

This story never grows old,  
And it will never end.  
From infancy to old age,  
To the final Amen.

Now the service continues  
With music and with the Word.  
We hear again the story,  
Each and every precious word.

All our hearts are full and warm,  
As the Scripture comes alive,  
Angels singing holy hymns  
Shepherds in the fields abide.

We all belong to Him,  
If you will just believe,  
Miracles of Christmas,  
Begin on Christmas Eve.

Our special service is now over,  
The final hymn has been sung,  
Jana's given the Benediction,  
The chimes and bells have been rung.

Thank you for being with us.  
We all hope you'll come again.  
All God's people are welcome.  
Let new friendships now begin.

Now please drive safely home,  
And rest your weary head.  
Dream of the infant Jesus,  
Using a manager for his bed.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**

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