

IN THIS ISSUE

- ✧ Pastor's Message
- ✧ Shut-Ins & Military
- ✧ December Services
- ✧ December Humor
- ✧ Birthdays and Anniversaries
- ✧ Men's Group
- ✧ Hymn Sing
- ✧ Cookie Walk
- ✧ Gift Card Fundraiser
- ✧ Messy Church
- ✧ Card & Game Club
- ✧ Meditation & Drum Circle
- ✧ Tree of Lights
- ✧ Fun Team Sneak Peak
- ✧ Financial Report
- ✧ Soul Food
- ✧ Just For Kids
- ✧ December Calendar

From the Pastor's Keyboard



The following is not a Christmas story per se. But it goes right to the heart of what the Incarnation means. And the Incarnation – God coming in human flesh to walk the Earth and to offer us salvation at great cost to God – is what Christmas is all about! 2 Corinthians 5:15 says: “And He died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died and was raised for them.”

Devotional writer Karen Sargent writes: “I scrolled through my Facebook feed and stopped on an image that took my breath away. My friend Ron stood in front of a stranger. Head bowed, Ron had a stethoscope in his ears. One hand was on the stranger’s shoulder. His other hand held the bell of the stethoscope over the man’s heart. Instant tears blurred my vision.

“Months earlier, Ron had lost his teenage son in a horrific accident. I didn’t have to read the text above the photo to understand that Ron was listening to his son’s heart giving life to another human being. As I stared at the picture, I wondered what Ron must be thinking at that moment. Please take care of my son’s heart. Remember what I lost so that you could have a new life. Never take this gift for granted.

“Surely conflicting emotions warred inside of my dear friend who had gone through such anguish. Utter grief. Awe and wonder. The bittersweet joy of hearing his son’s heartbeat again, despite his tragic and untimely death.

“As I stared at Ron’s photo, eyes closed, listening so intently, I imagined another Father whose Son gives new life. The cost of Jesus’s sacrifice became real to me. Because of His death on the cross, I have a new heart. A new life. Eternal life. That’s a gift I don’t want to take for granted either. —KAREN SARGENT

Karen Sargent offers this faith step for us: Give yourself a healthy heart checkup. In what ways are you taking care of your spiritual heart? What action can you do today to make sure you don’t take Jesus’s sacrifice for granted?

What a wonderful reminder as we enter the Advent – Christmas – Epiphany season of what Jesus coming to Earth and what His great sacrifice means for us. God lifts us up by coming down to us in Jesus Christ. Jesus offers us what no one else can – His spirit being put into our human spirit, His constant presence, His offer of eternal salvation, and His taking us to a whole new level of meaning in our lives.

As of this writing, we are rounding out November when we honored the lives of our members who have passed away this last year; celebrated the 50 + years of church membership of several of you; experienced a renewal of spirit as we worshiped for the first time in our newly-repainted sanctuary; put on another great Christmas Marketplace;



and recognized with thanksgiving the many ways we as a congregation reach out to the community, enjoy wonderful fellowship, experience rich worship, and serve friends and neighbors and the community in so many individual ways. We really are showing others what being a Christian is all about!

As we look forward to December, we celebrate Advent the first four Sundays (including the choral cantata "Rhapsody in Bluegrass: A Christmas Jubilee" on Sunday morning, December 24), Christmas Eve Candlelight and Lessons and Communion at 11:00 PM December 24 (young and old alike are encouraged to come in your PJ's), and Epiphany Sunday on December 31 when Cindy Innerst-Axe will be preaching. We decorate the church for Advent – Christmas – Epiphany on Saturday, December 2. We have our annual Cookie Walk on Saturday, December 9 from 9:00 AM – 12 NOON. Our Christmas Messy Church is on Friday, December 15, from 6:00 – 8:00 PM, featuring our special guests. We will again have our "Tree of Lights" this year as part of our Christmas Eve service where you can sponsor a light in memory of or in honor of someone or just as a year-end gift (this year's donations will help pay for the painting of our sanctuary).

Needless to say, there is a lot going on this coming month! In addition, as we look forward to 2024, the FUN team has planned activities for each month. We will encourage each other to continue or to start serving the church in the areas of our passions and gifts that we identified on our Time-Talent-Treasure Survey. We will also be challenged to find new ways that we can help address the hunger and clothing and homeless issues of our own area.

Remember our interim period questions: *What is God calling us here at St. John's Blymire's United Church of Christ of Dallastown, Pennsylvania, uniquely, to be and to do? What is our God-given niche in our community? What is it that only we can do (and no one else can do) for God's glory and purposes?*

See you around this month of December. God bless, Pastor Rick

REMEMBER OUR SHUT-INS and those in need of PRAYER

Terry & Fran Doll

Room 346

Residence @ Fitz Farm

2200 Springwood Rd.

York, PA 17403

Terry's cell (717) 968-2454

Fran's cell (717) 968-8754



Linda Trone

Room 604

Colonial Manor Nursing Home

970 Colonial Avenue

York, PA 17403

Keeping in our prayers

Cindie McKinsey

Friends battling cancer

Covid 19 patients

Peggy Luckenbaugh
Room 704B
Colonial Manor Nursing Home
970 Colonial Avenue
York, PA 17403



Remember
and pray for
Our Members
in the
Military

A1C Ness, Brandon

6907 S. Camino de la Humanidad

Tucson, AZ 85756

MONTH OF SUNDAYS WORSHIP SERVICES FOR DECEMBER 2023

December 3 - 1st Sunday of Advent

Scripture: Mark 13:24-37

First Capital Brass will conduct worship and bring the message through music
Sunday School

December 10 - 2nd Sunday of Advent

Scripture: Mark 1:1-8

Message: "Jesus' Advance Man"

Theme: John the Baptizer was more popular than most of us thought, yet he shows us how to have humility, courage, and bear witness to Jesus Christ

Sunday School

6:00 PM – Hymn Sing followed by cookies and hot chocolate

December 17 - 3rd Sunday of Advent

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38

Message: "The Angels' Message"

Theme: Mary was mystified, but she shows us how to be obedient, open to God accomplishing God's mission through us, and recognizing God's great gift of Jesus Christ

Sunday School

December 24 - 4th Sunday of Advent

Scripture: Luke 1:46-55

Message: Choral Cantata "Rhapsody in Bluegrass: A Christmas Jubilee"

December 24 - Christmas Eve Service at 11:00 PM

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Message: "Christmas Snapshots"

Theme: Among things and people there that first Christmas, Caesar Augustus, the humble stable, and shepherds keeping watch over their sheep come alive for us. Young and old alike (grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren) are encouraged to come in their PJ's as we usher in Christmas Day. We will have Communion, Candlelight, and our "Tree of Lights".

December 31 - 1st Sunday after Christmas/Epiphany

Scripture: Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Galatians 4:4-7

Message: "Heirs and Seeds" - Cindy Innerst-Axe preaching

December/Christmas Humor:

I passed one of those lots that sells Christmas trees. You know the kind. They're dedicated to the proposition that only God can make a tree and only people can make a buck!

There seems to be some question as to whether more gifts are exchanged on Christmas or the day after.

There's nothing like the Christmas season to put a little bounce in your checks.

During a Christmas play: "Not a preacher was stirring, not even a mouse."

A famous writer once sent Christmas cards containing nothing but 25 letters of the alphabet. When some of his friends admitted that they had failed to understand his message, he pointed to the card and said, "Look! No L!"

All of the humor above is from The World's Greatest Collection of Heavenly Humor, compiled by Bob Phillips, Harvest House Publishers, 1982 and from The Best of the Good Clean Jokes, compiled by Bob Phillips, Harvest House Publishers, 1989

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



*May God
Bless You on
Your
Birthday!*

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------|-----|----------------|
| 2. | Sundi Neuhaus | 26. | Thomas Miller |
| | Judy Bishop | 27. | Donna Sleeth |
| 5. | Natasha Brenner | | Sylvia Kohler |
| 6. | Cindy Luckenbaugh | 31. | Herbert Bosley |
| 7. | Jamie Klyeman | | |
| 10. | Kevin Myers | | |
| 12. | Carl Criswell | | |
| | Jennifer Roelke | | |
| | Katie Stoops | | |
| 14. | Jennifer Knickel | | |
| 16. | Lori Corso | | |
| 17. | Hannah Marshall | | |
| | W. Edwin Bishop | | |
| 18. | Brett Innerst | | |
| | Kortney Troop | | |
| 19. | Danielle Marshall | | |
| | Zachery Luckenbaugh | | |
| 22. | Carol Barnhart | | |
| | Callie Nugent | | |

CELEBRATING DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Dec. 16 - Rod and Linda Eichelberger - 56 years

Dec. 18 - Pastor Curt and Ginny Weber - 52 years

Dec. 28 - Terry & Sharon Stein - 32 years



MEN'S GROUP

The Men's Group will not be meeting in December. Enjoy your

holidays and we will see you again in January.



HYMN SING

On Sunday, December 10, from 6:00-8:00 PM, you are invited to join us for an old-fashioned Hymn Sing, followed by a cookie buffet and hot chocolate. The public is invited and there is no charge.

Our annual Cookie Walk will be held on Saturday, December 9, from 9:00 AM until noon (or sold out). A large selection of all types of homemade cookies will be available. Buy as many as you like, mix and match flavors, all for just \$12.00 per pound.



In order for this to be a success we need lots of cookies, so get out your cookbooks, mixing bowls and cookie sheets. Cookies may be dropped off at the church that week from 8:00AM—11:00AM on Wednesday, 8:00AM-1:30PM on Thursday and Friday, also Friday evening 6:00-8:00PM. In addition to bakers, volunteers are also needed to help set up Friday evening and with the sales on Saturday morning. Questions, call Marti Leader or Diana Myers.



Would you like to help your church without spending any extra money? You can do this by buying gift cards to use for everyday purchases or as gifts.

For every card sold we earn a profit from 1½% to 16%, depending on the merchant. To get your cards, just fill out an order form (available on the table in the Gathering Room) and attach a check or cash. Checks should be made payable to St. John's Blymire's UCC. You may drop the orders in the offering plate, place them on Wanda's desk in the office or mail them to the church. Payment must be included with your order. Orders will be sent to the Great Lakes Scrip Center each Monday morning. You may pick up your gift cards from Sandy Innerst at church the following Sunday. For more information about the program, you may call Wanda at the church office. **This is a great way to do your Christmas shopping!**

You are invited to join us on Friday, December 15, at 6:00 PM for our next Messy Church. This month we will be celebrating Christmas. As always, there will be stories, crafts, and a meal. We may even have some special guests from the North Pole. PLEASE INVITE YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.



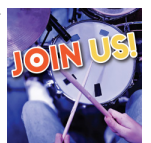
CARD and GAME CLUB

We have started a group to play card and board games here at the church. Everyone is welcome, and if you don't know how to play certain games, there will be someone who can teach you. You can bring lunch or order in.



We meet the second Wednesday of each month starting at 11:00 AM and playing until people are ready to stop. December's meeting will be on the 13th.

GUIDED MEDITATION AND DRUM CIRCLE



Meditation and Music are very good ways to deepen your personal spiritual practice. Relax, let go of worldly thoughts, and sink into your soul. You are invited to join us on Saturday, December 16, at 10:00 AM for Guided Meditation, followed by Drum Circle, with a variety of instruments available.

A Love Offering will be received. Love Offering is a way to show your gratitude to the facilitator of the gathering. Love Offering can take many forms. I have received stones, feathers, bread, cash, etc. It is a personal expression of gratitude between you and me. Any cash received will go back into the Fun Team for future activities. Come, experience! Cindy Innerst-Axe.



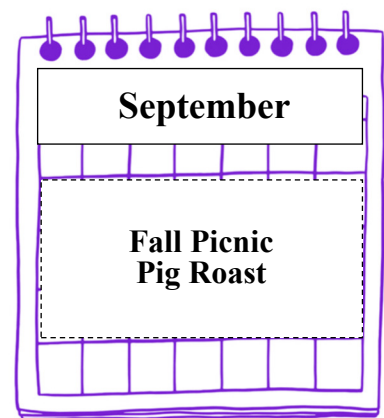
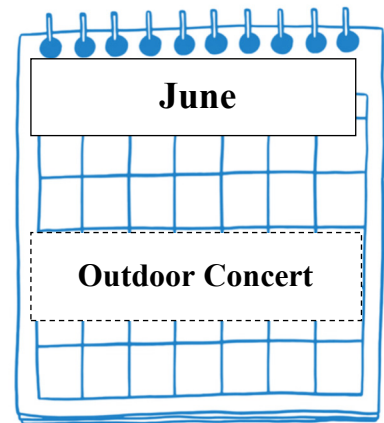
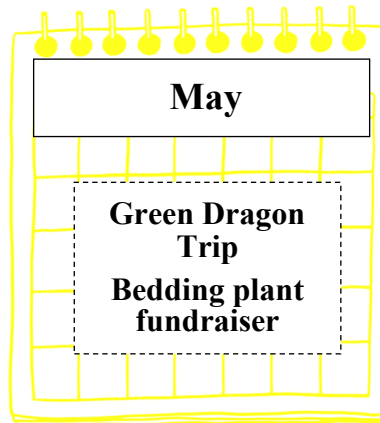
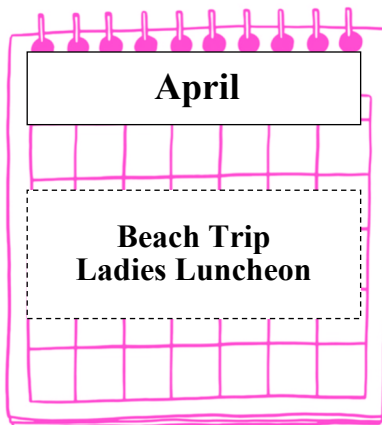
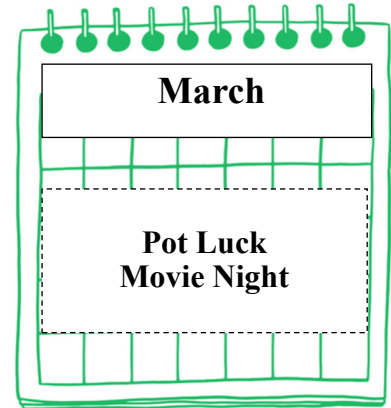
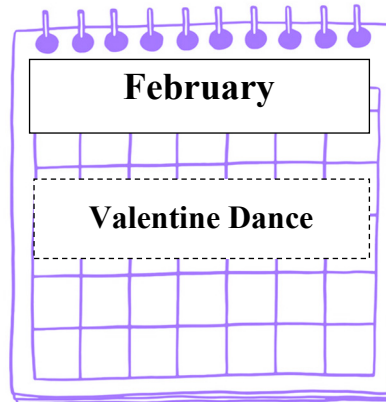
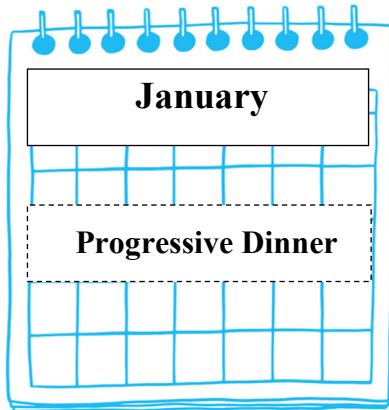
Tree of Lights

As we did last year, we will be including a "Tree of Lights" as part of our Christmas Eve service. You may sponsor a light in memory of or in honor of someone or just as a year end gift to help support our church. This year's donations will be used to help pay for the painting of our sanctuary.

There is a Sponsorship form in the November newsletter or you can pick one up from the Welcome Table in the Gathering Room.

FUN TEAM

SNEAK PEEK for 2024



FINANCIAL REPORT

Undesignated General Fund

Red Brick Chapel

Cemetery

Month-2023	Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Income	Expense
January	\$10,823.00	\$9,149.59	\$0.30	\$612.18	\$738.24	\$200.00
February	\$7,242.25	\$9,309.43	\$0.22	\$338.98	\$0.12	\$375.34
March	\$8,179.00	\$13,350.64	\$0.29	\$702.79	\$900.10	\$328.10
April	\$9,009.22	\$7,960.45	\$625.31	\$351.05	\$101.05	\$1,293.75
May	\$10,849.03	\$9,661.89	\$0.34	\$199.00	\$1,501.74	\$2,848.62
June	\$8,587.00	\$12,552.97	\$0.29	\$471.88	\$1.50	\$2,643.54
July	\$11,008.44	\$7,653.83	\$100.22	\$231.66	\$11.00	\$2,607.15
August	\$8,409.25	\$8,988.85	\$0.21	\$207.87	\$200.70	\$2,703.63
September	\$8,472.44	\$11,433.76	\$0.15	\$345.01	\$200.34	\$2,633.98
October	\$12,061.00	\$10,615.65	\$150.41	\$503.30	\$1,801.67	\$2,851.03
November						
December						
Total	\$94,640.63	\$100,677.06	\$877.74	\$3,963.72	\$5,456.46	\$18,485.14

Balance of Undesignated General Fund @ November 1, 2023

\$8,924.58

Balance of Red Brick Chapel Fund @ November 1, 2023

(Includes \$57,865.86 Endowment)

\$58,245.70

Balance of Cemetery Fund @ November 1, 2023

(Includes \$810,666.72 CD's, Trusts, UCC Foundation)

\$818,669.86

Financial Assistance Given through Hand of Hope Fund - 2023

	#	Total	Monthly	Available
	Families	\$\$\$	Donations	Balance
Beginning				\$ 806.82
January	3	\$576.00	\$ 151.00	\$ 381.82
February	1	\$150.00	\$ 80.00	\$ 311.82
March	1	\$25.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 316.82
April	2	\$50.00	\$ 28.00	\$ 294.82
May	3	\$100.00	\$ 27.25	\$ 222.07
June	3	\$125.00	\$ 22.00	\$ 119.07
July	1	\$50.00	\$ 61.25	\$ 130.32
August			\$ 18.00	\$ 148.32
September	2	\$50.00	\$ 98.30	\$ 196.62
October	2	\$50.00	\$ 171.55	\$ 318.17
November				
December				
Total	18	\$1,176.00	\$ 687.35	

Let's approach Christmas with an expectant hush, rather than a last-minute rush.



DECEMBER 2023

A Special Christmas Gift: When an airline ticket agent named Nelle Harper Lee complained to her friends about finding time to write, they left an envelope for her on Christmas. It read, "you have one year off from your job to write whatever you please" and offered to support her for a year. Determined not to waste it, Harper Lee used the time to write "To Kill a Mockingbird" which sold over 30 million copies and won the Pulitzer Prize.



"One day you will realize that happiness is not what your house looks like, but how you love the people within its walls. Happiness is not finding success by a certain time, but finding something you love so much time itself seems to disappear. Happiness is not thinking you have earned the world's approval, but waking up each day and feeling so at peace within your own skin, quietly anticipating the day ahead, unconcerned with how you are perceived. Happiness is not having the best of everything, but the ability to make the best of anything. Happiness is knowing you did what you could with what you were given. Happiness is not something that comes to us when every problem is solved and all things are perfectly in place, but in the shining silver linings that remind us the light of day is always there, if we slow down enough to notice."

Brianna Wiest

Prayer is a kind of "calling home" everyday! And there can come to you a serenity, a feeling of at-homeness in God's universe, a peace that the world can neither give nor disturb, a fresh courage, a new insight, a holy boldness that you'll never, never get any other way.

Earl G. Hunt Jr.

If you look for me at Christmas,
You won't need a special star.
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem,
I'm right there where you are.
You may not be aware of Me,
Amid the celebrations.
You'll have to look beyond the stores,
And all the decorations.
But if you take a moment,
From your list of things to do,
And listen to your heart, you'll find
I'm waiting there for you.
You're the one I want to be with,
You're the reason that I came.
And you'll find Me in the stillness,
As I'm whispering your name.



Love, Jesus

Valerie Kingsbury

IF THERE HAD BEEN THREE WISE WOMEN

They would have asked directions,
arrived on time,
helped deliver the baby,
cleaned the stable,
made a casserole,
and brought practical gifts, and
there would be peace on earth.



Unknown

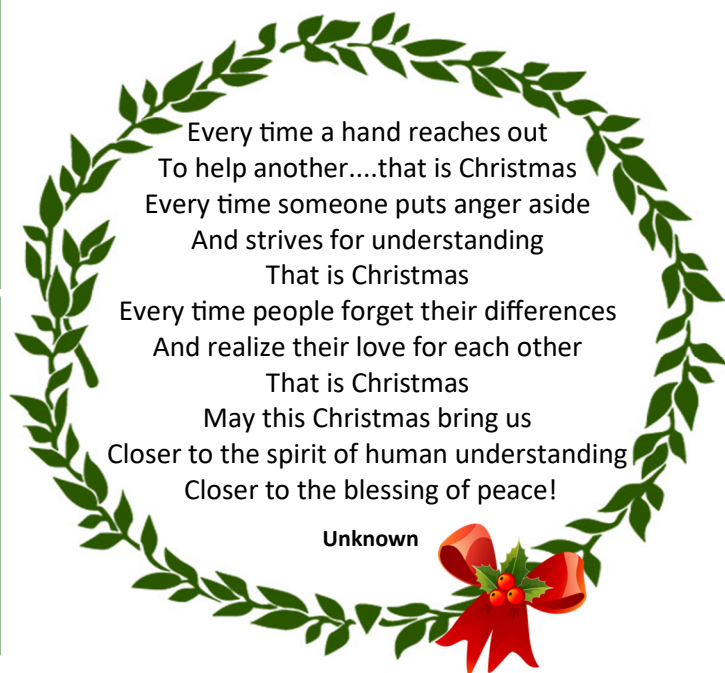
HOLIDAY WISH LIST

Less gifts, more memories
Less busyness, more peace
Less stress, more joy
Less chaos, more calm
Less excess, more gratitude

The Simplicity Habit

Every time a hand reaches out
To help another....that is Christmas
Every time someone puts anger aside
And strives for understanding
That is Christmas
Every time people forget their differences
And realize their love for each other
That is Christmas
May this Christmas bring us
Closer to the spirit of human understanding
Closer to the blessing of peace!

Unknown



THE PURPLE CRAYON

I stress this point every year, that Christmas is NOT about the cost of presents or how many items a person gets!

Remember to be blessed for what you do have.



I received many gifts in this lifetime, but this present will always be a gentle reminder that it is always the thought that counts.

As I sit here at my desk and reflect on this holiday season, I can't help but smile with all the blessings that I have in my life. I keep this present in my office as a reminder that it doesn't cost a thing to make someone's day.

9 years ago, a student of mine saw other kids giving me presents and he had nothing to give. He took a box from a present he was given and his purple crayon from his pouch and wrapped it. He walked up to me and said "I hope you love it, it is your favorite color."

I still get tears in my eyes when I open this box.

Purple is my favorite color. He knew that. He paid attention to what I said. He didn't have much to give in his eyes, but he gave me so much more than a purple crayon.

He gave me love. He gave me his heart. He gave me a kind gesture. If you don't feel like you have much to give this season, remember that.... love is free., giving your heart is free, being kind is free

God bless!

Heather Babin Benoit

SITTING WITH GOD

What if sitting with God was like sitting with an old friend who knows you so well, there's no need to say anything.

Just to sit in silence, within their presence, grateful for being here, all through your life, no need to

impress, nothing to hide, fully accepted as you are, embraced by love. You have arrived home, experiencing the fullness of being, in a simple moment of stillness beyond this time and place. You know there's more to life than this body and mind. You have touched your soul. Give thanks to this Old Friend who has been and always will be, here for you, waiting in the stillness, for you to come.

Alex Thomson

THE KING OF CREATION

"So this is he," thought Gabriel. "This is God's gift. A Savior. He shall save the people from their sins."

Gabriel's heart was full. He turned to Mary as she cradled her child, and he spoke. It didn't matter that she couldn't hear him.

"Do you know who you hold, Mary? You secure the author of grace. He who is ageless is now moments old. He who strides upon the stars now has legs too weak to walk. The hands that held the oceans are now an infant's fist. To him who has never asked a question, you will teach the name of the wind. The source of language will learn words from you. He who has never stumbled, you will carry. He who has never hungered, you will feed. The King of creation is in your arms."

Max Lucado

The bad news is time flies.
The good news is you're the pilot!


Michael Altshuler



WHAT I LEARNED FROM A SNOWMAN

- * It's okay if you're a little bottom heavy.
- * Hold your ground, even when the heat is on.
 - * Wearing white is always appropriate.
 - * Winter is the best of the four seasons.
- * It takes a few extra rolls to make a good midsection.
- * There's nothing better than a foul weather friend.
 - * The key to life is to be a jolly, happy soul.
 - * We're all made up of mostly water.
 - * Accessorize! Accessorize! Accessorize!
 - * Avoid yellow snow.
 - * Don't get too much sun.
 - * It's fun to hang out in your front yard.
- * There's no stopping you once you're on a roll.

Unknown



LIGHT-UP BOX

Christmas lights remind us that Jesus shines in the darkness. Here's a fun way to play with holiday lights.

What you need:

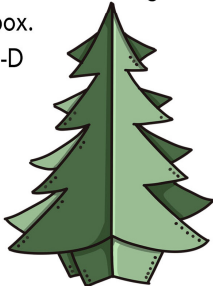

- A strand of Christmas lights
- A large clear plastic container and lid
- Green tissue paper
- Colorful beads



What you do:

1. Plug in the lights and place them in the container.
2. Put on the lid. (If the lid isn't transparent, flip the box over.)
3. Play with your light box, using these ideas as starters:
 - Cut tissue paper into triangles and arrange them in a tree shape. Decorate the tree with colorful beads.
 - Use the light box for tracing. Place a picture on it, with a clean sheet of paper on top. Then trace the drawing.
 - Use magnet tiles to build designs atop the light box.

Try building a 3-D Christmas tree!

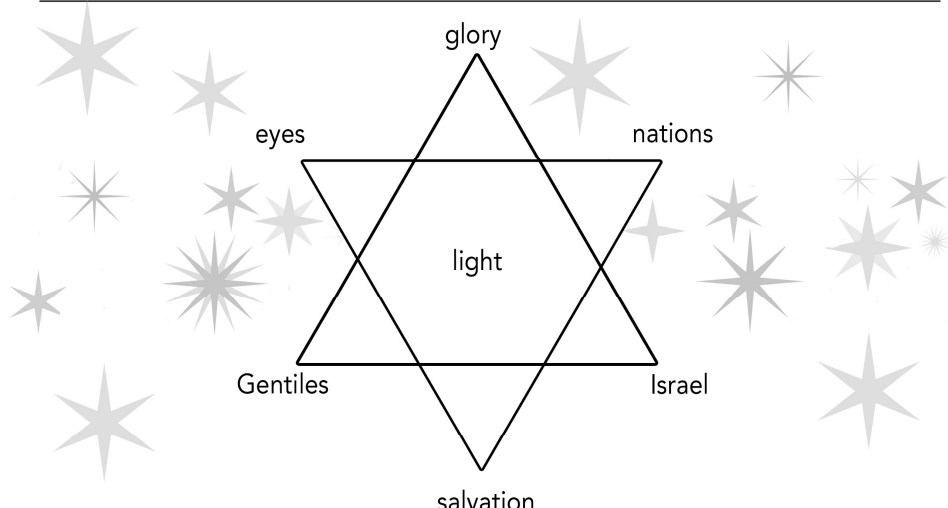



PUZZLE

SIMEON'S SIGHT

When Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the temple, they heard a special prophecy from Simeon.

Directions: Using the star key, write the words in the correct spaces to complete Luke 2:30-32, NIV.



"For my _____ have seen your _____, which you have prepared
 in the sight of all _____: a _____ for revelation to the
 _____, and the _____ of your people _____."

Luke 2:30-32, NIV

Answers: eyes, salvation, nations, light, Gentiles, glory, Israel