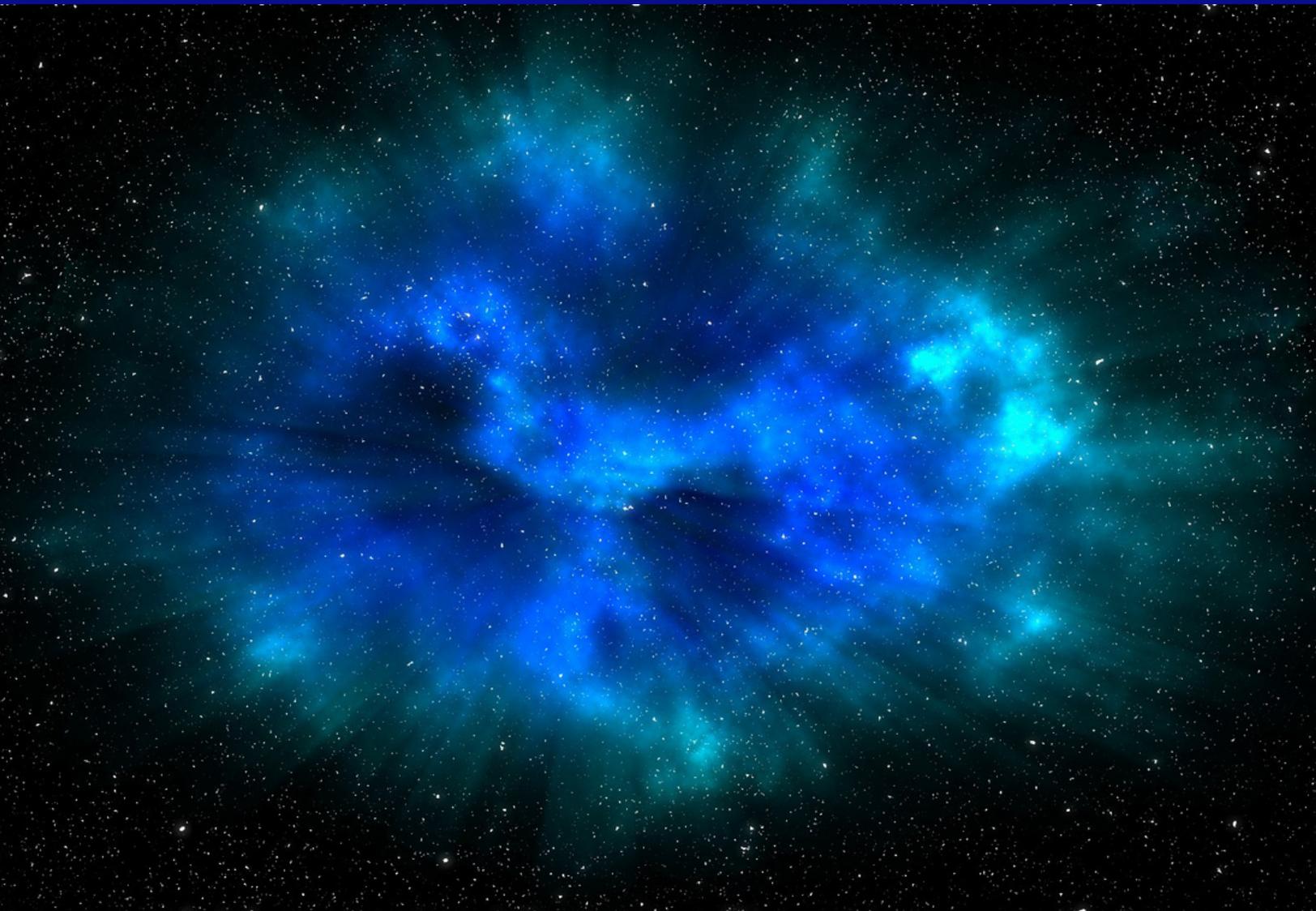


DECEMBER 2022
ISSUE 12
VOLUME 9

A FAITH[AT]HOME MAGAZINE

ADVENT
CHRISTMAS
EPIPHANY

**THE
STORY WILL
CHANGE YOU**



**CHINOOK WINDS & PACIFIC MOUNTAIN
REGIONAL COUNCILS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA**

FIRSTTHIRDMINISTRY.CA

THE STORY

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WELCOME

WELCOME TO THIS 12TH ISSUE OF FAITH@HOME MAGAZINE!



YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A CITY BUILT ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN. PEOPLE DO NOT LIGHT A LAMP AND PUT IT UNDER THE BUSHEL BASKET; RATHER, THEY PUT IT ON THE LAMPSTAND, AND IT GIVES LIGHT TO ALL IN THE HOUSE. IN THE SAME WAY, LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, SO THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GIVE GLORY TO GOD.

What would happen if we truly lived into these words from the Gospel of Matthew and *let our light shine before others*?

Could we spend some time in this advent season focused on how we might bring delight and joy to someone else?

Could we slow down, quiet our hearts and minds in the 12 Days of Christmas so that we can notice God's presence and light in the world around us?

Could Epiphany be a time where we remind everyone around us, including ourselves just how beloved we are by our Creator God?

We hope you enjoy this magazine and share time with your family to hear, pray and play the stories for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. May your light shine for the world to see!

Blessings!

A FAITH@HOME MAGAZINE FROM FIRST THIRD MINISTRY OF CHINOOK WINDS AND
PACIFIC MOUNTAIN REGIONAL COUNCILS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

firstthirdministry.ca

THE STORY

SHARING TRADITIONS

TRADITIONS



Traditions are a significant part of our preparation and celebration of this season. Advent Wreaths greet us at front doors, in our churches and on our dinner tables. We gather each week to notice God's presence with us on the journey, we prepare special foods, write cards and letters, decorate our home, journey into our neighborhoods to see light displays to name just a few. We might have new ways to reflect our traditions because of the pandemic. Traditions help ground our lives in the experience of the season, help us connect to our ancestors and our faith.

We hope you might notice the ways other cultures and people celebrate and mark this season – ask your friends, listen to new music, go online and research, or join other church services. May the One who is coming remind you of your belovedness, fill you with kindness and bring you joy.

What are the traditions in your household?

THINKING OF YOU CARDS



For some people, the holiday season is a time of grief, stress, or loneliness. A homemade card can mean a lot to someone who is isolated, ill, or having a tough time.

If you don't have a set of holiday cards handy, here are some quick card ideas:

- Have folks at home make abstract paintings on big sheets of paper. When they dry, cut rectangles and glue onto folded cardstock.
- The images from your almost-finished 2022 calendar can be used to decorate the front of cards.

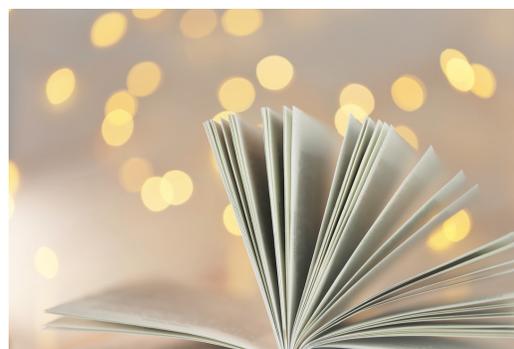
BOOK LIST

Advent

- *Welcome Baby Jesus: Advent and Christmas Reflections for Families* by Sarah A. Reinhard
- *The Wonder of the Greatest Gift: An Interactive Family Celebration of Advent* by Ann Voskamp
- *All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings* by Gayle Boss
- *25 Days of the Christmas Story: An Advent Family Experience* by Dr. Josh and Christi Straub
- *Christmas is Coming: An Advent Book* by Katie Hickey

Christmas

- *The Donkey's Christmas Song* by Nancy Tafuri
- *The Carpenter's Gift: A Christmas Tale about the Rockefeller Center Tree* by David Rubel
- *Merry Christmas, Mouse* by Laura Numeroff
- *This is the Stable* by Cynthia Cotten
- *Silent Night* by Lara Hawthorne
- *God Gave Us Christmas* by Lisa Tawn Bergren
- *Pippin the Christmas Pig* by Jean Little



Epiphany

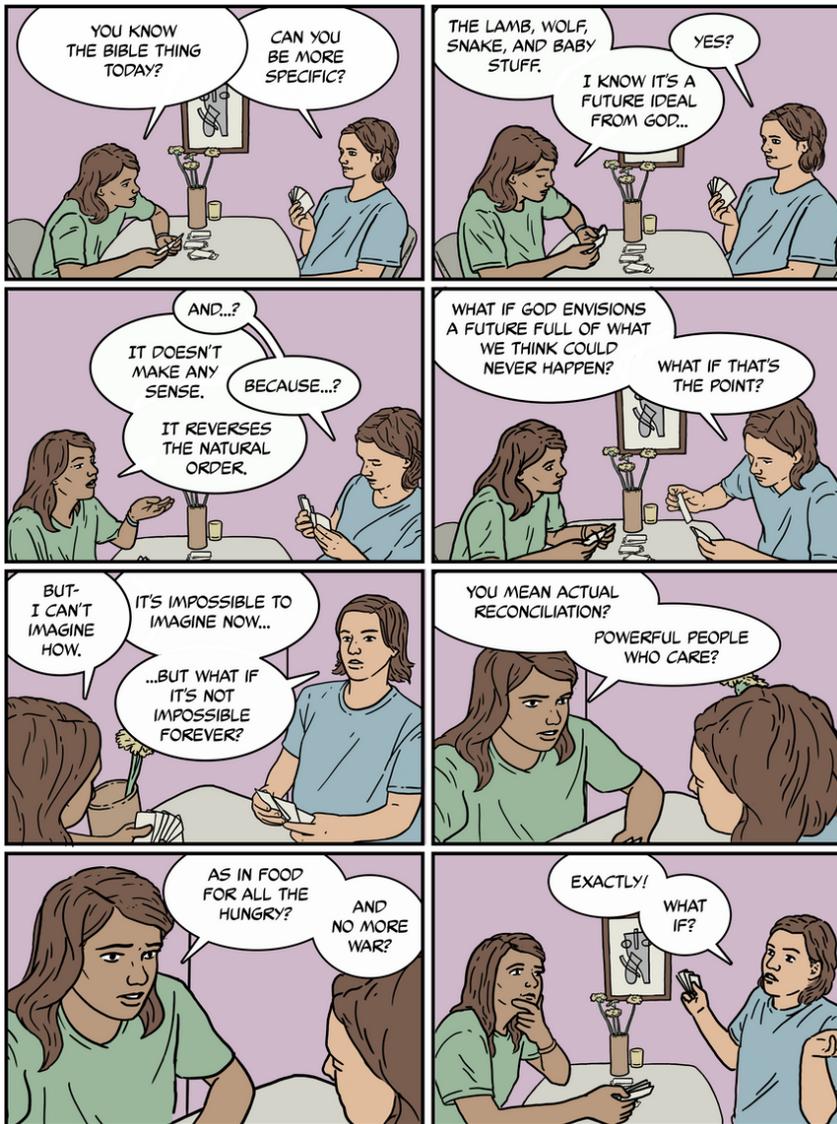
- *The Last Straw* by Frederick Thury
- *We Three Kings* by Gennady Spirin
- *They Followed a Bright Star* by Joan Alavedra
- *Baboushka and the Three Kings* by Ruth Robbins
- *The Third Gift* by Bagram Ibatoulline
- *Strega Nona's Gift* by Tomie dePaola



THE STORY

ADVENT

"ADVENT" Art by Jacob Dewey.



ISAIAH 11:1-10

Adapted from Contemporary English Version

WEEK 1 – HOPE

A SHOOT SHALL COME OUT FROM THE STUMP OF JESSE, FROM JESSE'S ROOTS, A BRANCH WILL BLOSSOM.

THE SPIRIT OF THE GOD SHALL REST ON YOU, A SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING, A SPIRIT OF COUNSEL AND STRENGTH, THE SPIRIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND AWE FOR GOD.

YOU WILL DELIGHT IN OBEYING GOD, AND YOU WON'T JUDGE BY APPEARANCES OR MAKE DECISIONS BY HEARSAY...

JUSTICE WILL BE THE BELT AROUND YOUR WAIST - FAITHFULNESS WILL GIRL YOU UP. THE WOLF SHALL DWELL WITH THE LAMB, THE LEOPARD SHALL LIE DOWN WITH THE YOUNG GOAT, THE CALF AND THE LION CUB WILL GRAZE TOGETHER,

AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.

THE COW AND THE BEAR SHALL GRAZE, THEIR YOUNG SHALL LIE DOWN TOGETHER; AND THE LION SHALL EAT STRAW LIKE THE OX. THE BABY WILL PLAY NEXT TO THE DEN OF THE COBRA, AND THE TODDLER WILL DANCE OVER THE VIPER'S NEST.

THERE WILL BE NO HARM, NO DESTRUCTION ANYWHERE ON MY HOLY MOUNTAIN, FOR AS WATER FILLS THE SEAS, SO THE LAND WILL BE FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

ON THAT DAY THE ROOT OF JESSE WILL SERVE AS A SYMBOL TO THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD, NATIONS WILL FLOCK TO YOU, AND YOUR HOME WILL BE A PLACE OF HONOUR.

Scripture Conversation Starters: Isaiah 11: 1-10

- Where are the parents?
- Why is it a stump and not a full tree?
- How does the child feel about leading them?
- What makes the mountain holy?



THE STORY

ADVENT

SHARE: HOUSEHOLD ADVENT WORSHIP

For each week of Advent, we invite you to place a symbol of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love with your Advent spiral. You have your own ideas of what those symbols mean to you, here are some other ideas:

- 1st Sunday in Advent: **Hope**
(Sunrise/Sunset, Doves)
- 2nd Sunday in Advent: **Peace**
(Origami cranes, Peace Sign)
- 3rd Sunday in Advent: **Joy**
(Joyful Faces, Musical Notes)
- Fourth Sunday in Advent: **Love**
(Photos of those you love)

Each week, share together:

- When/Where/How do you experience _____
(insert advent weekly word) in your life?

Pray Together:

Holy One, we pray that your light of _____ may come into the midst of the conflict and stress in our world, in our community and in our own lives. Guide us on a path of _____.
May we listen for new ways to act with compassion and justice, in your loving name, we pray, **Amen.**



CREATE: AN ADVENT SPIRAL

Each year for Advent we prepare with an Advent wreath to count down the days and Sundays to Christmas. We light the candles for hope, peace, joy and love as we gather around the wreath to be together.

An alternative to the traditional Advent wreath is the Advent Spiral. The spiral is used to count down all the days to Christmas and lead to a central candle to light at the end of Advent when we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

You can make a spiral like the one in the picture, and mark the four Sundays of Advent and use a candle for the middle of the spiral.

There are a few ways to mark the other days. You could make paper or felt stars for each day of Advent outside of the four Sundays already included. An alternative to stars is to make fingerprints with paint to mark each day of Advent. You can use a little figure or a glass pebble to mark the days and move through the spiral and up to the candle in the centre.

Each spiral will be different and unique to the family that is making it. What your spiral will look like? Who you will share it with?

"FAITH@HOME THE STORY WILL CHANGE YOU

SPOTIFY PLAYLIST



Christmas music is a large part of our traditions.

What is your favourite song?

Go to Spotify and search for the playlist: "Faith@Home" The Story Will Change You!"



THE STORY

ADVENT

/ 7

SUGAR COOKIES

Advent is a time for waiting and preparing. During that time, families often build traditions in anticipation of Christmas, such as making Christmas decorations, creating or using an Advent calendar to help count down the days to Christmas or bake cookies to share with friends and family.



Exchanging baked Christmas goods is a fun way to also meet your neighbours and make new friends. Here is an invitation to make some delicious sugar cookies with your family, wrap them up in a homemade gift bag and drop some off to your neighbours.

Go to this website for a cookie recipe, ask a family or friend for a recipe or you can scan the qr code by the sugar cookie above.

<https://sallysbakingaddiction.com/best-sugar-cookies/>

FAMILY SHRUB



What is the Jesse Tree story? The Jesse Tree tradition is rooted in Isaiah 11:1: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesse was the father of David, Israel's greatest king. And Jesus is descended from the line of David. He is the branch God promised would grow from Jesse's family tree. A Jesse Tree is a way of preparing for Advent by journeying through the stories of Jesus' family tree.

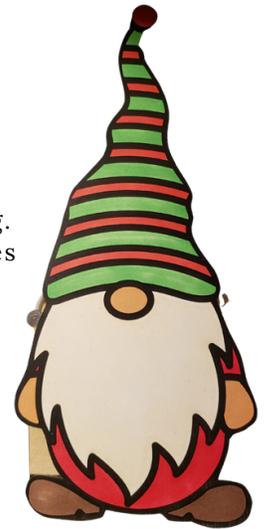
Draw the shape of a shrub on a piece of paper. We have people in our life and in our family who we have a strong connection with and those who we don't know very well or at all. Families come in all shapes and sizes.

When you think of family, who comes to mind? These are the people you are invited to name on your family shrub of love and connection. I wonder what is your favourite memory of each person you name on your shrub?

What symbol best represents each person in your family? Draw this symbol on your shrub. You can add your shrub to your advent worship space as a reminder to hold each person in prayer during this season of Advent.

FLAT GNOMES

The season of Advent is a time of patience and waiting. Families have different types of traditions on how they count down the days to Christmas. Some use an Advent calendar - either with candies, toys or even tea; others do different activities each day to mark the days until Christmas.



Some families have adopted the popular Elf on the Shelf as their Advent tradition. The Elf returns from the North Pole at the beginning of December and stays with the family that has adopted them until Christmas. Often the Elf is mischievous and gets itself into all kinds of situations.

The Flat Gnome included in this magazine is an alternative that your family can adopt as a new tradition. To bring the gnome to life, have the family colour the gnome together. The gnome can be touched by those who have brought it to life.

There is magic in the colouring that brought your gnome to life. In some homes the gnome likes to find new hiding places each night and folks look for them in the morning in a game of hide and seek. Each year the gnome also brings books to read from the beginning of Advent until Christmas. Sometimes the books are the same and sometimes they are new. It is a tradition that could bring a lot of joy to your family.

What magic will your gnome bring to your family? What colours will bring your gnome to life. Most of all, may your gnome be a source of joy to your family!



GIFT BAG MAKING



The holiday season is one that is not just busy but for many it means a hectic time for not finding the perfect gifts but also the perfect gift paper and gift bags. Each year millions of pounds of paper are used in gift wrapping at Christmas.

One way to reduce how much wrapping paper or gift bags are bought and then discarded each year, your family can make your own paper or gift bags.

Supplies:

- Butcher paper roll or plain paper shopping bags
- Christmas cookie cutters
- Christmas stencils
- Markers and paint
- Brushes
- Ribbons
- Twine

Instructions:

1. Choose whether you are making wrapping paper or a gift bag.
2. For a gift bag, use a hole puncher to make holes for the handles. Use twine to create the handles, which can be reinforced with tape. Ribbons can be used to decorate the handles.
3. Using the stencils or cookie cutters decorate the paper or gift bag.
4. Have fun making gift bags for other family members and friends!

Instead of recycling the gift bags, use them each to give a new present in them. You can invite your extended family and friends to participate in this experience.



Photo by Ilinca Poon

STUMPS

The scripture in Isaiah 11 speaks of the stump and that “a shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse” (Isaiah 11:1). The stump that grows the branch that is eventually Jesus himself.

This spring while on a walk in Vancouver’s Stanley Park, I came upon a stump that at first look seemed to be dead, until at a closer look I saw that there were budding leaves all over the stump.

We encounter stumps in our yards after cutting a tree down. While not all stumps will return to life and bring forth new branches and life, they can be life sustaining to other life or can be a source of joy to people.

A stump can be hollowed out and turned into a bird feeder or a bird bath that would help sustain the bird and the squirrels in one’s backyard. A stump can be again teaming with life.

The stump can also be decorated with a fairy door and built a little garden on top of it. The stump can be hollowed out to make space for a garden and then bees and butterflies can bring life back to the stump. Sometimes fungi or moss might grow on the side of a stump and there is a whole mycelial network that works under the ground to connect all the things living above the ground.

Next time you have a stump in your backyard, what might you do with it?



SPIRAL DANCE

If you've ever doubted that "if you can walk, you can dance" this is the dance for you. Because it's all walking. The "dance" element is in the directions and in the meaning. A spiral dance is a way of expressing a specific idea through movement. You can do this with music if you want to. You could sing if you have a singing kind of group.

Everyone stands in a circle, facing in. Now hold hands. If you're not comfortable holding hands, the best option would be for everyone to put their right hand on the left shoulder of the person standing to your right, whose right hand is on the left shoulder of the person to *their* right and so on around the circle. There are other possibilities but they're a) harder to do and b) harder to explain. It can get tricky to do this dance in a socially distant kind of way (maybe holding scarves between hands? So one person holds one scarf in their right and one in their left. The person to their right holds the other end of the scarf in the first person's right hand and the person to their left holds the other end of the scarf in the first person's left hand and so on around the circle?)

One person is the leader and they let go of the hand of the person on one side of them and starts walking in that direction. As they walk along, they will pass other people standing in the circle - the ones who haven't started walking yet at first and then people who are walking further back in the line. It's polite to smile at people.

When the lead person has reached the point where they are at the centre of a spiral of people, then - without letting go of the person whose holding their hand - they turn to start walking back out of the spiral. They will continue to smile at the people whom they pass who will smile back. (This doesn't mean walk backwards.)

When everyone is back out and standing in one big circle again, everyone will be facing outwards. The discipleship path brings us into a tight community and then sends out into the world again.

If the group is confident, you can play with the walking pattern. Three steps forward, one step back is an easy option that also symbolizes the discipleship journey: for every three steps of progress we make, we make one step of (whatever the opposite of progress is), but overall our movement is always forward.

Sounds complicated? It's not once you get the hang of it and here is a fairly ordinary looking group of people pulling it off - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW-VVC_brjQ. (They end up facing inward because the leader does a cute little diddle with the ending walk.)

SCAN ME



#WANDERING WISEMEN

Want to follow along with others animating the nativity?

The Wandering Wisemen celebrate the joyful anticipation of the season. Beginning on Day 1 of Advent November 27, 2022.

Join Balthazar, Melchior, and Caspar - along with their faithful camel, Hezekiah - on a whimsical holiday quest to find the infant king. Follow along with The Wandering Wisemen on Facebook.



Image: Photos from [thewanderingwiseman/facebookgroup](https://www.facebook.com/thewanderingwiseman/)

THE STORY

CHRISTMAS

"CHRISTMAS" Art by Jacob Dewey.



LUKE 2:8-20

Contemporary English Version

IN THAT REGION THERE WERE SHEPHERDS LIVING IN THE FIELDS, KEEPING WATCH OVER THEIR FLOCK BY NIGHT.

THEN AN ANGEL OF THE LORD STOOD BEFORE THEM, AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD SHONE AROUND THEM, AND THEY WERE TERRIFIED. BUT THE ANGEL SAID TO THEM, "DO NOT BE AFRAID; FOR SEE—I AM BRINGING YOU GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY FOR ALL THE PEOPLE:

TO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOR, WHO IS THE MESSIAH, THE LORD.

THIS WILL BE A SIGN FOR YOU: YOU WILL FIND A CHILD WRAPPED IN BANDS OF CLOTH AND LYING IN A MANGER."

AND SUDDENLY THERE WAS WITH THE ANGEL A MULTITUDE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST, PRAISING GOD AND SAYING,

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST HEAVEN, AND ON EARTH PEACE AMONG THOSE WHOM HE FAVORS!"

WHEN THE ANGELS HAD LEFT THEM AND GONE INTO HEAVEN, THE SHEPHERDS SAID TO ONE ANOTHER, "LET US GO NOW TO BETHLEHEM AND SEE THIS THING THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE, WHICH THE LORD HAS MADE KNOWN TO US."

SO THEY WENT WITH HASTE AND FOUND MARY AND JOSEPH, AND THE CHILD LYING IN THE MANGER. WHEN THEY SAW THIS, THEY MADE KNOWN WHAT HAD BEEN TOLD THEM ABOUT THIS CHILD;

AND ALL WHO HEARD IT WERE AMAZED AT WHAT THE SHEPHERDS TOLD THEM.

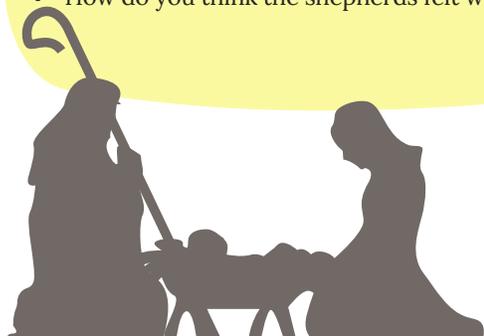
BUT MARY TREASURED ALL THESE WORDS AND PONDERED THEM IN HER HEART.

THE SHEPHERDS RETURNED, GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD FOR ALL THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN, AS IT HAD BEEN TOLD THEM.

Scripture Conversation Starters:

Luke 2: 8-20

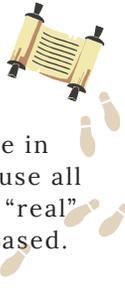
- Do you think that all of the shepherds went to Bethlehem?
- What do you imagine happened with the flocks of sheep?
- What do you think Mary and Joseph said to one another when they saw the shepherds?
- How do you think the shepherds felt when they saw the baby Jesus?



ANCIENT TEXTS IN CONTEXT: SHEPHERDS

Written by Shannon Tennant

When I was in grade 4 and finally allowed to be in the Christmas pageant I was a shepherd. Because all the grade 4s were shepherds. You didn't get a "real" role until grade 5 at the earliest. I was not pleased. Shepherds had no panache.



There has been a rumour going around (and I've spread it as enthusiastically as anyone) that at the time Jesus was born, shepherds were nasty. They were dirty from being out in the fields all the time, smelly from being out with sheep all the time, and religiously unacceptable because they were too far out of town to take part in religious observances. The idea we were promoting was that Jesus' birth was being announced to people who were way way way outside of polite and respectable society, and because the shepherds got the good news first God was no longer concerned with a whole bunch of the previous religious rules.

This is not true. (Except for being dirty. Everyone was dirty most of the time until 200 or so years ago. So they might have been smelly too.)

But they were not disreputable. At least some of the sheep the shepherds were watching were probably going to be used in religious sacrifices, so the shepherds were a really important part of the religious practices at that time. They had a responsible job doing useful work that benefited the community. The good news about Jesus was coming to ordinary people who were out in the field - God's messages can come to anyone anywhere.

But wait! There's more.

"Being a shepherd" was a way of describing how a good and responsible king should rule. A ruler should guide their people in the right ways of being a nation and away from the wrong ways - just like a shepherd guides sheep in the right paths and protects them from dangers. A good monarch should provide for their people in the same way that a shepherd would provide green grass and still water for their sheep.

When we read about the shepherds we should remember God's idea of a good king is nothing like the kind of ruler that Caesar Augustus was.

References: Psalm 23
Levine, Amy-Jill. *Light of the World: A Beginner's Guide to Advent*. 2019. The United Methodist Publishing House. Nashville, TN.



CHRISTMAS EVE GIFT GIVING

Christmas Eve is an evening full of anticipation at the end of the Advent season and in expectation of Christmas morning. The air is filled with excitement. Families often attend a family service in preparation for the birth of Jesus.

In some countries families decorate their Christmas tree on that evening and often open a small gift together.

One Christmas tradition is to have a family Christmas Eve box that the family can open together. The box often contains Christmas pyjamas and socks, snacks for the evening such as popcorn and hot chocolate, a Christmas movie or game, and a read-aloud book for the whole family. *Twas the Night Before Christmas* is a family favourite for the book to include in the Christmas Eve box.

This tradition helps families to settle in for one more night of waiting. It also gives the family activities that they can do together and enter the Christmas season together. The box can be used again each year with new items added each year. As children grow, the box can be adapted to fit their age and stage better. Some families build a seasonal board game shelf over the years using their Christmas Eve box to introduce new games each year. A library of books can also be built in this way and can become a treasured family memory.

This is a simple gift giving tradition that any family can adopt. It does not require a lot of preparation time and is unique to each family. If your family has not yet tried this tradition, perhaps this could be the year when your family starts.



THE STORY

CHRISTMAS

WEAR YOUR PYJAMAS TO CHURCH SUNDAY

Many years ago my daughter asked “Why don’t we have Pyjama Day at church like we do at school?” Technically you can wear your pyjamas to church anytime but she was looking for something a little more organized. Then the Sunday after Christmas happened to fall on a day when one of our families traditionally spent all day in their pyjamas. And so Wear Your Pyjamas to Church Day was born.

On the Sunday after Christmas everyone is invited to wear the pyjamas, robe, or whatever is their idea of super comfy, cozy wear (some kind of clothing is required). The rest of the service is also relaxed and fairly low effort. It’s evolved over the years but what we do right now is Unwrap the Gifts of Worship.

Every part of worship is wrapped up, except for the welcome and the benediction. Sometimes it’s just a piece of paper with “hymn” or “reading” or “opening prayer” tucked into a gift bag or fancy box. Sometimes a hymnbook, story book, prayer book (etc) is wrapped in actual wrapping paper (but I’m lazy so I like the gift bags and boxes better - it’s meant to be low effort, after all). Someone gets to start - youngest person, person with the closest birthday - and they pick one and unwrap it. Whatever is inside is what we do first.

For the Sermon/Reflection/Homily/Ancient Texts in Context we have had picture books. We have also had questions that the person who opened the gift is invited to answer and then they get to invite one other person to answer it as well(or we ask for volunteers). Last year’s question was “What Special Christmas Thing Do You Have and What’s Its Story?”

If the pianist is willing, we let people choose their preferred Christmas hymn if they get to unwrap “hymn”. Or they can choose from a pre-selected list. Or the specific titles are included in the gift bag. It depends on the comfort level of whoever is providing accompaniment that day.

The idea is to keep it relaxed and allow for some sharing of experiences and traditions, in the spirit of the kind of quiet joy and welcome that I imagine to have been something like how Mary and Joseph welcomed shepherds, relatives and neighbours in the days after the birth of their baby.



WORDSEARCH

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M V Y W J A B H Z N Q I G I N
I X A X O G W V J V B W Q V Q
W V R M C N J L Y K S I Y U L
A F O X H S D U F H T S A V Z
I H O C R M G E R V A E O C J
T L M J I I F B R A R O O D R
I I A A S C Z J L R H N W A B
N J T W T C S C K O Q E O D B
G W T E M R R R M O P S T V X
H G H X A K F X C W F P V E S
L T E H S E P I P H A N Y N W
Y U I E Y T O W E J X E Y T Y
K V N D N P H O L Y N I G H T
B Q N P V B B A B Y J E S U S
B A R N J O U R N E Y W S N N

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- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Room At The Inn | Christmas |
| Holy Night | Journey |
| Wonder | Barn |
| Awe | |
| Baby Jesus | Wise Ones |
| Epiphany | Waiting |
| Advent | Star |



CHRISTMAS

A CHRISTMAS DINNER PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of the Christmas ritual. After the anticipation of Christmas Day all throughout Advent, we prepare for a feast to celebrate with family and friends the birth of Jesus.

As we gather around the table, we remember the journey that we have been on to get here, waiting week after week to get to the manger.

Praying before we start our feast is a way for us to connect with those around the table and with God. Prayer can be read or spoken by either one member of the family or by the family together. Some pray with words alone and some with their whole body, connecting actions to words.

This Christmas Day, you are invited to gather around your table and put together a prayer of your family's making.

Start the prayer with calling on God in the way that is most comfortable to your family - loving, creator or dear God are some examples. A body action that could start the prayer is putting your arms up into the air as if reaching towards the sky.

Allow the words and the actions to flow naturally. Some might want to thank God for the food, the family and friends gathered together. What actions might fit those pieces of gratitude?

Continue the prayer around the table, involving all those who would like to participate in the creation of a special prayer.

End with bringing your hands together in front of you, as you clap Amen!



12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

We often think that Christmas ends with the birth of Jesus on Christmas day, however that is only the beginning of the Christmas season. The Christmas season is the twelve days that follow and that lead up to Epiphany day.

Perhaps this year instead of ending Christmas on Christmas Day, you and your family might try to engage in the liturgical Christmas season with one of the following ideas or come up with one that fits your family best.

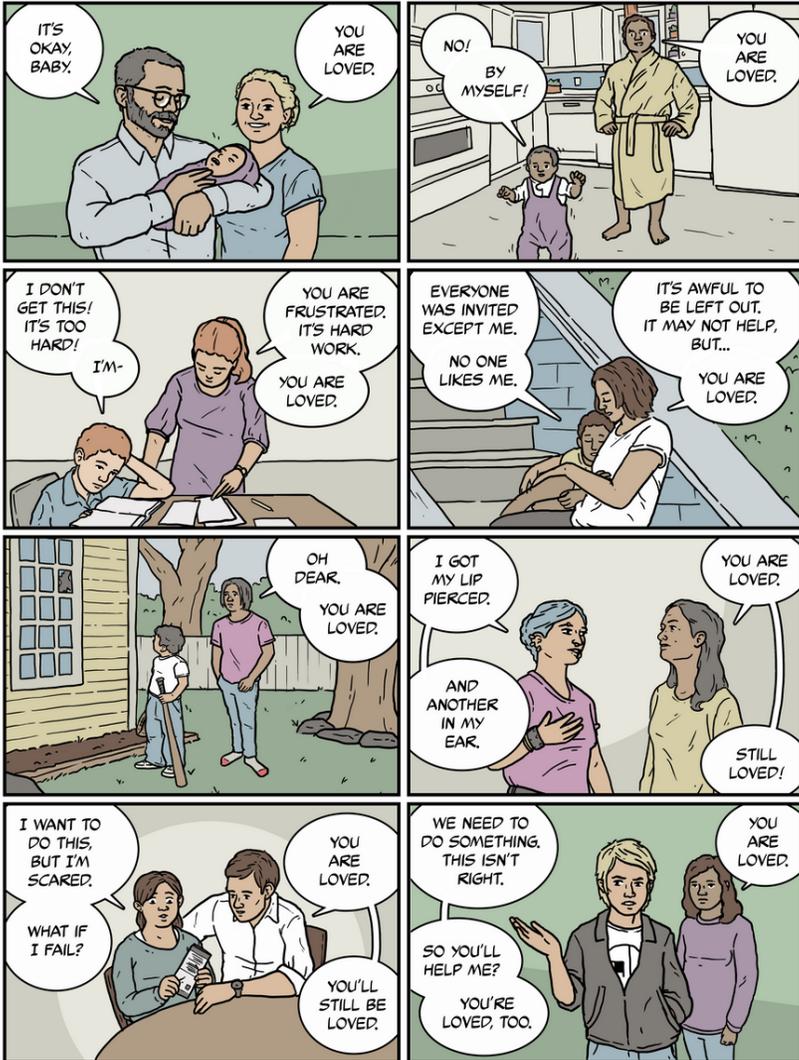
- **12 Days of Books** - find and read 12 books as a family
- **12 Days of Outdoors** - choose a different activity that can be done outdoors as a family, some ideas might be to go walking, skating, snowshoeing, sledding, etc.
- **12 Days of Movies** - have a movie date each night, take turns choosing the movie and watch something that someone else enjoys to come together as a family
- **12 Days of Games** - play a different game each day, perhaps this is a good time to add a new game to your shelf and learn to play together
- **12 Days of Slowing Down** - choose a way to slow down each day, take a moment to read, have a nap, go on a walk, etc.
- **12 Days of Gratitude** - make it a habit to share what you are grateful for each day, either by sharing at a meal with the family or by keeping a gratitude journal
- **12 Days of Excitement and Awe** - take time each day to name something that you are excited about or fills you with wonder and awe

Whether you choose one of these activities or choose one of your own making, enjoy the season of Christmas in its entirety!

THE STORY

EPIPHANY

"EPIPHANY" Art by Jacob Dewey.



MATTHEW 3:13-17

MATTHEW 5:13-16

Contemporary English Version

THEN JESUS CAME FROM GALILEE TO JOHN AT THE JORDAN, TO BE BAPTIZED BY HIM. JOHN WOULD HAVE PREVENTED HIM, SAYING, "I NEED TO BE BAPTIZED BY YOU, AND DO YOU COME TO ME?" BUT JESUS ANSWERED HIM, "LET IT BE SO NOW; FOR IT IS PROPER FOR US IN THIS WAY TO FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS." THEN HE CONSENTED.

AND WHEN JESUS HAD BEEN BAPTIZED, JUST AS HE CAME UP FROM THE WATER, SUDDENLY THE HEAVENS WERE OPENED TO HIM AND HE SAW THE SPIRIT OF GOD DESCENDING LIKE A DOVE AND ALIGHTING ON HIM. AND A VOICE FROM HEAVEN SAID, "THIS IS MY SON, THE BELOVED, WITH WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED."

"YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH; BUT IF SALT HAS LOST ITS TASTE, HOW CAN ITS SALTINESS BE RESTORED? IT IS NO LONGER GOOD FOR ANYTHING, BUT IS THROWN OUT AND TRAMPLED UNDER FOOT.

"YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A CITY BUILT ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN.

NO ONE AFTER LIGHTING A LAMP PUTS IT UNDER THE BUSHEL BASKET, BUT ON THE LAMPSTAND, AND IT GIVES LIGHT TO ALL IN THE HOUSE.

IN THE SAME WAY, LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, SO THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GIVE GLORY TO YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.



Scripture Conversation Starters:

Matthew 5: 13-16

- Have you ever heard the word 'beloved'? What does it mean to you?
- What does it feel like to shine your light in the world?
- What are some lights in the world that help us?



ANCIENT CONTEXT: BAPTISM

Written by Shannon Tenant

Do you remember your baptism? I don't. I was an infant. Maybe you were too. Or maybe you were a toddler (like my daughter), or maybe you were old enough to remember it perfectly.

I bet Jesus remembered his baptism. Not just because of the dove and the voice, but because he was an adult who decided he wanted to be baptised. Nobody asked me. It was just done and later on I got to decide if I wanted to confirm that I belonged in the church, but no one can take baptism away even if you decide you don't want it.

So why did we start baptising babies and what does baptism mean in The United Church of Canada. Good question. And I'm not sure I have a super good answer.

People started baptising babies because in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles entire households were baptised so they figured that must have included children. Then someone got the idea that if people weren't baptised they'd go to hell and a very long time ago a lot of babies died so parents rushed to get their babies baptised just in case. That's the easy part.

The hard part is what does baptism mean in The United Church of Canada today. Officially and basically, it's how people become members of the covenant community of faith that is the church universal (not just The United Church). Symbolically, it is a way of expressing that God's love is poured out on this person - but much more abundantly than we usually pour water at baptisms. It's also a commitment to live in a way that follows the values that Jesus showed us. Adults and older children can make that promise for themselves, but when a child is young parents make the promise to teach their child what it means to love God and follow Jesus, and to show their child what God's love is like by loving them.

So mostly baptism is about belonging, loving and being loved. The part where I get tangled up, though, is that a person who hasn't been baptised and is part of a community of faith still belongs. You aren't more loved if you are baptised, or less likely to live in a way that reflects Jesus' values if you aren't baptised.

You are loved no matter what. You belong no matter what. Baptism is the official, symbolic act that proclaims those things. Choosing to be baptised is a strong statement of faith and commitment. Choosing to have a child baptised is a great statement of love and commitment. But faith and love and commitment aren't dependent on baptism. They're gifts of the same Spirit that acts in our lives - and in our baptism.

STAINED GLASS STAR ART

The story of Epiphany tells of the journey of the three wise people following the star to Bethlehem to see Jesus. Each year we celebrate Epiphany at the end of the twelve days of Christmas.

Our scripture reading this year for Epiphany comes from the Gospel book of Matthew chapter 5. In this passage Jesus reminds us that we are light of the world and that such a light is not meant to be hidden, but let shine for all to see.

I wonder how you are light in the world? I wonder how you let your light shine for all to see, like a lamp put on a stand for all to see?

Create stained glass star, make it a reminder that you are a light of the world as well as a symbol of the star that the wise people followed. Put your star in a window where it can be seen by those in your house as well as by those outside. Let your light shine!



Image: Jenn@Maplerose

THE STORY

EPIPHANY

CHANGING THE LIGHT

Some lights are bright and help us see what needs to be seen like a flashlight or car light.

God's people often pay attention to people who are ignored, who need help. God's people often pay attention to creation and how we need to help the earth. God's people often point out unfair situations and work to get them changed.

I wonder what people need to pay attention to? I wonder how you help people in your life to pay attention?

Some lights are soft and help us see the beauty of the world, like candles God's people do whatever they can to make the world more loving for everyone.

- I wonder how you help people know that they are loved?
- I wonder what helps you know that you are loved?

Reference: adapted and edited from <http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2014/01/year-fifth-sunday-after-epiphany-fifth.html>

SALT ART

Supplies:

Cardstock template
White glue
Table salt
Food colouring
Small cups
Water
Paintbrush



Instructions:

Trace the words on the card with white glue.
Sprinkle salt over the white glue.
Shake off any excess salt and let the salt dry.
Prepare cups with water and add food colouring in desired colours.
Once the salt has dried, use a paintbrush to add colour to the salt.
Enjoy the way that the colours spread!

About the activity:

In the verse from Matthew 5, we are reminded that we are the salt that helps to bring out the God-flavouring here on Earth. If we were to lose that ability to flavour things the way that salt does, we would not be able to lead our lives in the way that Jesus wanted us to lead. This little art piece is to remind us who we are and what we are called to do while on the Earth. Place it somewhere in your home where it can be seen often!

CHALKING THE DOOR

D20 + C + B + M + 23



Over 2000 years ago the Magi--Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar-- traveled over a great distance. They followed a star the whole way and found baby Jesus. Chalking the door is an Epiphany house blessing ritual. The ritual of marking the door is a visible sign of our faith and a welcome to all who come through the door. In Deuteronomy 6 God tells the people of Israel, "Let these words that I command you today be written in your heart. Teach them diligently to your children and repeat them constantly...write them on your doorposts of your house and on your gates." This ritual is a tangible way to honour God; to love God with all our heart, soul, and strength.

Mark your door with the initials of the three Magi, and the numerals of the New Year connected by a series of crosses. 20 + C + M + B + 23. Some say that the C M B also stands for the Latin prayer request, Christus Mansionem Benedicat, May Christ bless this house.

Blessing

May all who enter our home know the love of God. May all who leave our home be love lived, in action and word, in our world.
In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen



EPIPHANY

KINDS OF SALT

Salt appears in different places on the Earth. Depending on the type of salt, its use in the kitchen or outside of the kitchen differs.

Here are ten types of salt and how they are used:

1. Table salt

This is the most common salt, harvested from salt deposits found underground, such as salt mines. It is highly refined and finely ground. It is the type of salt that we most often use in cooking and baking.

2. Kosher salt

This is a flakier and coarser-grained salt than table salt. It is a great all-purpose cooking salt as it dissolves very quickly. It is also great for sprinkling on meat to help release a surprising blast of flavour.

3. Sea salt

This type of salt is harvested from evaporated seawater. It is usually unrefined and coarser-grained than table salt. It is a salt that contains more minerals from where it is harvested such as zinc, potassium, and iron. Like kosher salt it is used to sprinkle on top of food to release a bigger burst of flavour than table salt.



4. Himalayan pink salt

This salt is the purest form of salt in the world and is harvested by hand from salt mines in the Himalayan Mountains in Pakistan. The colour of the salt ranges from off-white to deep pink. This salt contains as many as 84 natural minerals and elements found in the human body. It is used in spa treatments as well as in the kitchen.



5. Celtic sea salt

This salt is harvested from the bottom of tidal ponds off the coast of France. Celtic salt is moist, has chunky grains, a grey hue, and briny taste. It is great to use on fish and meat, as well as for baking.

6. Fleur de Sel

Translated as “flower of salt”, this salt is a sea salt that is hand-harvested from tidal pools off the coast of Brittany, France. This is a salt that requires labour-intensive harvesting and is therefore the most expensive. This has earned it the nickname “the caviar of salts”. If you can afford to use this salt, it is great to use as a finishing salt on meat, seafood, vegetables and even chocolate and caramel.

7. Flake salt

This salt is harvested from saltwater through evaporation or boiling, which creates salt flakes that are thin and irregular shaped with a bright, salty taste and very low mineral content.

This salt provides a “pop” of flavour and is best used as finishing salt, especially on meats.

8. Black Hawaiian salt

This salt is also known as black lava salt and is a sea salt harvested from the volcanic islands of Hawaii. Its deep, black colour comes from the addition of activated charcoal to the salt. This salt is coarse-grained and crunchy and is great for finishing pork and seafood.



9. Red Hawaiian salt

This salt, also called alaea salt, is an unrefined, red Hawaiian salt that gets its name and colour from the reddish, iron-rich volcanic clay alaea. This salt has been used for years in ceremonial ways for cleansing, purification and the blessing of tools. This salt is also used in the kitchen in traditional dishes such as poke and pipikaula, a Hawaiian jerky.

10. Smoked salt

This salt is slow-smoked up to two weeks over a wood fire, which means this salt adds an intense and smoky flavour to dishes. Depending on the type of wood used for the smoking process, each salt will have its own unique flavour. This salt is great to be used for flavouring meats and hearty vegetables such as potatoes.



EPIPHANY

STAINED GLASS COOKIES

An Epiphany twist to the classic sugar cookies are these stained glass cookies. The stained glass image will remind you of the star and the light that the shepherd and magi followed to find the baby Jesus in the manger.

The recipe is followed the same as with the sugar cookies, with the following changes:

Extra Ingredients:

- 15-20 unwrapped hard candies, Jolly Rancher candies are great for this

Instructions:

1. Chill the dough.
2. As the cookie dough chills, begin crushing the candies. The best way to crush hard candies is to separate them by colours, place each colour into plastic bags, and crush with a rolling pin or meat mallet. Set crushed candy aside.
3. After the cookie dough is chilled, preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line 2-3 large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone mats.
4. Remove the top dough piece from the refrigerator. Using a large cookie cutter, cut the dough into shapes. Using a smaller cookie cutter of the same design, cut out the centre shape. Centre shapes are not used so can be re-rolled.
5. Reroll the remaining dough and continue until it is all used. Repeat with the 2nd piece of dough.
6. Carefully arrange cookies on a baking sheet 3 inches apart.
7. Fill the cut-out centres about $\frac{3}{4}$ full with crushed candies. The candy pieces melt and expand, so you don't need to over-fill. Use one colour per cookies or mix a few for a spotty multicoloured look
8. Bake for 12-13 minutes or until candies have melted and the cookies are lightly browned around the edges.
9. Allow cookies to cool on the baking sheet until the melted candy centre sets, about 15 minutes.
10. Once the melted candy centre has set, transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

SCIENCE WITH SALT: GROWING GUMMY BEARS

Supplies:

- Two small bowls
- Water
- Salt
- Gummy bears



Instructions:

1. Start by making a supersaturated salt water solution by adding salt to a cup of boiling water until the salt stops dissolving when added. Add the salt little by little to observe when it stops dissolving.
2. When you have the supersaturated water solution, put it in the fridge to cool it down. Warm water might melt the gummy bear.
3. Once the water is cooled, pour some into one bowl, filling the second bowl with plain tap water.
4. Choose some gummy bears that are similar in size.
5. Place a couple of gummy bears in the salt water and a couple in the plain water.
6. Keep some gummy bears to compare to the ones in the water.
7. Gummy bears need to soak for a few hours and are best to be soaked overnight (not longer or they may fall apart).
8. Discuss what you observe at the end of the experiment.
9. What do you notice if you eat the gummy bear that was soaked in salt water solution?



SCIENCE WITH SALT: BUILD CRYSTALS!

Having learned so many interesting facts about salt, we are ready to have some fun with a couple of salt science experiments!

Grow Salt Crystals

Supplies:

- 1/2 cup (120 ml) of tap water or distilled water
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) of salt (table salt, Epsom salt, or alum salt)
- One small pan
- String
- Pencil or popsicle stick
- Glass jar
- Food coloring dye (optional)
- A helpful adult



Instructions:

Have an adult heat a pan of water just until it begins to bubble

Choose your salt. Different salts produce different crystal results.

Take the pan off the heat source.

Pour in about 1/4-1/2 cup of salt and stir until the water is clear. If you don't see any salt grains in the water, stir in another spoonful. Keep stirring in salt until you see salt grains that won't dissolve when stirred.

Have your adult slowly pour the hot water onto a clean jar or another clear, heat-safe container. Stop before the salt grains fall into the jar. If there are undissolved salt grains in the jar, the crystals might grow around those grains instead of your string.

Optional: Add a couple of drops of food coloring to change the color of the crystals. This might make crystals smaller or lumpier but not by much.

Tie a string around a pencil or popsicle stick. The string should have tiny grooves and rough edges so that the salt can latch on. A braided string is ideal instead of a fishing line. The pencil or popsicle stick should be long enough to lie across the top of the jar.

Cut the string to the correct size to dangle in the water. Only a portion of the string underneath the water will grow crystals. Cut it short enough to avoid touching the bottom of the jar or the crystal will be lumpy and small.

Balance the pencil on top of the glass jar. The string should hang inside the jar and extend into the water. If the pencil won't stay still, tape it against the jar. Try not to have the string touch the side of the jar as it will make smaller and lumpier crystals grow against the side.

Move the jar to a safe place where it will be undisturbed.

Wait for crystals to form! Epsom and alum salt crystals can start growing within a few hours but could take a couple of days. Table salt takes a day or two to start growing and sometimes up to a week.

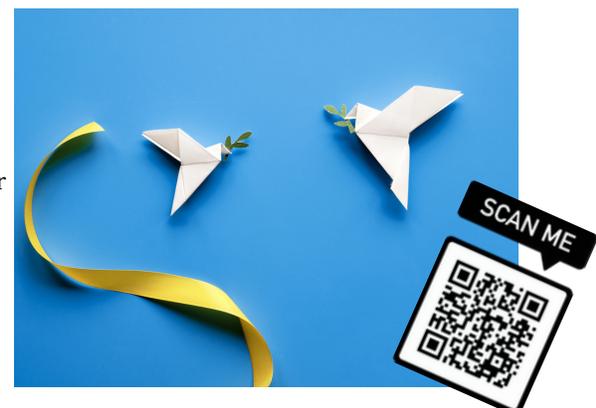
Check back regularly to see if salt crystals have grown on the string. Once you see little crystals growing on the string, they will usually keep growing bigger over the next couple of weeks.

ORIGAMI DOVES

In the scripture from Matthew 3, at the end of Jesus's baptism by John "God's Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him" (Matthew 3:16). Often we think of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending from the sky to announce that Jesus is God's son.

This simple origami dove can be made out of either origami paper or a piece of regular paper cut into a square.

Follow the easy steps in this video and make your own dove to remind you of that special day. Perhaps it will make you think and remember your own baptism. Do you remember it or do you have someone to tell you about that day?



THE STORY WILL CHANGE YOU

A UNITED CHURCH FAITH@HOME ADVENT CALENDAR

Have a dinner conversation with your family and come up with an idea you could participate in that would benefit someone in your community

30

World AIDS Day

The theme for 2022 is "Reflection. Celebration. Rejuvenation" and highlights this year's theme to reflect the resilience of surviving the COVID-19 pandemic and to begin healing and rejuvenation.

1

Write a card or letter to your minister, youth worker, church administrator and tell them why they are awesome

2

Make some hot chocolate and snuggle on the couch

3

Head on over to Spotify and search for the Faith@Home playlist.

5

Make your own Christmas paper using recycled paper and stamps, paint, or anything you can find

6

Put together a food hamper for a household in your community

7

As a family create a list of all the things you are grateful for this Advent Season

8

Decorate your Christmas Tree if you have not already. I wonder if you have a favourite ornament?

9

Do some holiday baking to share with friends and neighbours

10

JOY

Sort your belongings and donate or re-gift what you no longer need

SUNDAY 11

Write a household Christmas letter

12

Support a small businesses by shopping local

13

Find a boardgame that you haven't played in a while

14

Start a new holiday tradition!

15

Walk a labyrinth

16

Make snowflakes or other decorations out of recycled materials

17

LOVE

Choose an activity that everyone in your family loves to while you travel to the last star on your Advent spiral.

SUNDAY 18

Read a Christmas story

19

Purchase a gift for someone in need

21

Go look at some Christmas lights in your PJ's

22

Light a candle in memory of lost loved ones

23

CHRISTMAS EVE

Make up a Christmas board game!

24

JESUS IS BORN!



25

HOPE

As a family talk about what hope means to each one of you. Where do you see hope in the world today?

27

Make sugar cookies using the recipe found in this edition of the magazine

28

Stroll around your neighbourhood for a winter walk and try to notice something you have not seen before

29

PEACE

Gather around the second star on your Advent spiral, talk about the meaning of peace. Together create a prayer of peace for the world

SUNDAY 4