

DECEMBER 2020

ISSUE 4

VOLUME 1

ADVENT

CHRISTMAS

EPIPHANY

Special Edition for friends of Peninsula United Church

SEEKING LIGHT



Peninsula
United
Church

A FAITH@HOME MAGAZINE FROM THE PMRC FIRST THIRD MINISTRY, UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA



pmrfirstthirdresources.ca

SEEKING LIGHT

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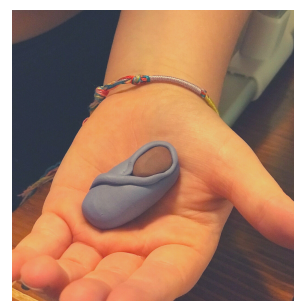
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WELCOME TO THIS 4TH ISSUE OF FAITH@HOME MAGAZINE



Photo: Joanna Kosinska

THOSE WHO WALKED IN
THE DARK
HAVE SEEN A BRIGHT
LIGHT.
AND IT SHINES UPON
EVERYONE
WHO LIVES IN THE LAND
OF DARKEST SHADOWS.

ISAIAH 9:1-2

Traditions are such a significant part of our preparation and celebration of this season. Advent wreaths adorn sanctuaries and dinner tables, preparation of special foods fill our freezers, cards and letters get mailed, decorations adorn the home, there are outings to see lights, you can probably name the ones that your household appreciates.

This year, our experiences might be a bit different, we will create new ways that reflect the traditions that have been part of our lives because of the pandemic. We might also consider the traditions of our homes and how bound they are to our own cultural perspective.

What are our images of Christ? How is the story of the birth of our Saviour shared in our homes? The great British Theologian, missionary, and author Lesslie Newbigin said, "**The fact that Jesus is much more than, much greater than our culture-bound vision of him can only come home to us through the witness of those who see him through other eyes.**" This year, we are invited to expand our perspective, notice the ways that other cultures and people celebrate this season - listen to new music, ask your friends, go online and do some research, visit other churches online.

May the One Who Comes remind you of your belovedness and fill you with kindness and mercy, and give you joy.

A FAITH@HOME MAGAZINE FROM THE PMRC FIRST THIRD MINISTRY, UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

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SEASONAL BOOK SUGGESTIONS

Storybooks are such a beautiful way to share time! We love the following books for the ways they tell the ancient story of our faith tradition. Check them out at your local library or find one to add to your household's book shelves.

Advent

1. "All the Colors of Christmas" by Matthew Paul Turner
2. "Who Is Coming To Our House?" by Joseph Slate

Christmas

1. "The Christmas Miracle of Jonathon Toomey" by Susan Wojciechowski
2. "Jesus' Christmas Party" by Nicholas Allan
3. "The Christmas Menorahs" by Janice Cohn (for older children & teens)

Epiphany

1. "When God Made Light" by Matthew Paul Turner
2. "The Last Straw" by Frederick Thury
3. "Three Wise Women" by Mary Hoffman
4. "The Legend of Old Befana" by Tomie dePaola ✨



Photo: Patri

HOMEMADE AIR-DRY MODELLING CLAY

Make some Homemade Air-Dry Modelling Clay to create Baby Jesus, make some ornaments - the ideas are endless!

- 2 cups of baking soda
- 1 cup of cornstarch
- 1 1/4 cups of water

Place all ingredients into a pot over medium heat. Stir the mixture almost constantly, until it thickens and becomes the consistency of whipped mashed potatoes. Let cool and then knead until smooth and no longer sticky. Done! Now create!

A couple of things:

- Keep excess dough in a damp towel to keep it from drying out before you want it to.
- Thicker pieces tend to crack more during the drying process, so try to keep your creations on the thinner side if possible.
- Placing a piece of parchment paper on either side of the clay while rolling it out really helps!
- You want the drying process to be sloooooow to avoid cracking - air drying is best. Gently flipping the ornaments over every now and then, helps too. ✨



Photo: Wandering Wisemen

The Wandering Wisemen celebrate the joyful anticipation of Christmas. Beginning on Day 1 of Advent, November 29, 2020, join Balthazar, Melchior, and Caspar - along with their faithful camel, Hezekiah - on a whimsical holiday quest to find the infant king! You can follow them on Facebook ✨ facebook.com/thewanderingwisemen

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

FAITH@HOME

WORD SEARCH

Joy
Prophet
Equip
Connect
Wild Star
United Church
Peace
Advent
Hope
Equip
Love
Epiphany
Christmas
Baby Jesus
Imagine



FIND THE LIGHT

Choose a spot in your home and make it as dark as possible. Maybe it's a closet or room where you can block out window?

Enter the spot with an unlit candle or flashlight. Once your eyes have adjusted to the darkness, see if you can notice any spots where there is still light. Is it possible to block out those light sources too?

Light your candle or turn on your flashlight. What a difference a small source of light can make in what otherwise seems to be a dark place!

What places in your life can you bring light to darkness? What helps you to see the light in times of darkness? How does the light of Jesus shine in the world? ✨



CHRISTMAS MUSIC IS
A LARGE PART OF
OUR TRADITIONS.
EVERYONE HAS THAT
FAVOURITE SONG!

Go to Spotify and search for the playlist "PMRC SEEKING LIGHT 2020" to check out the team's treasured music & podcasts for the season!

STAR SUGAR COOKIE RECIPE

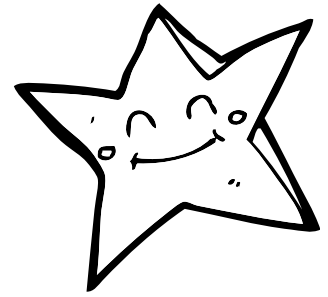
Yields 3 ½ Dozen Cookies

Ingredients

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 tablespoon milk
- Powdered sugar, for rolling out dough

Instructions

- Sift together flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside. Place butter and sugar in large bowl of electric stand mixer and beat until light in color. Add egg and milk and beat to combine. Put mixer on low speed, gradually add flour, and beat until mixture pulls away from the side of the bowl. Divide the dough in half, wrap in waxed paper, and refrigerate for 2 hours.
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
- Sprinkle surface where you will roll out dough with powdered sugar. Remove 1 wrapped pack of dough from refrigerator at a time, sprinkle rolling pin with powdered sugar, and roll out dough to ¼-inch thick. Move the dough around and check underneath frequently to make sure it is not sticking. If dough has warmed during rolling, place cold cookie sheet on top for 10 minutes to chill. Cut into desired shape, place at least 1-inch apart on greased baking sheet, parchment, or silicone baking mat, and bake for 7 to 9 minutes or until cookies are just beginning to turn brown around the edges, rotating cookie sheet halfway through baking time. Let sit on baking sheet for 2 minutes after removal from oven and then move to complete cooling on wire rack. Serve as is or ice as desired. Store in airtight container for up to 1 week.



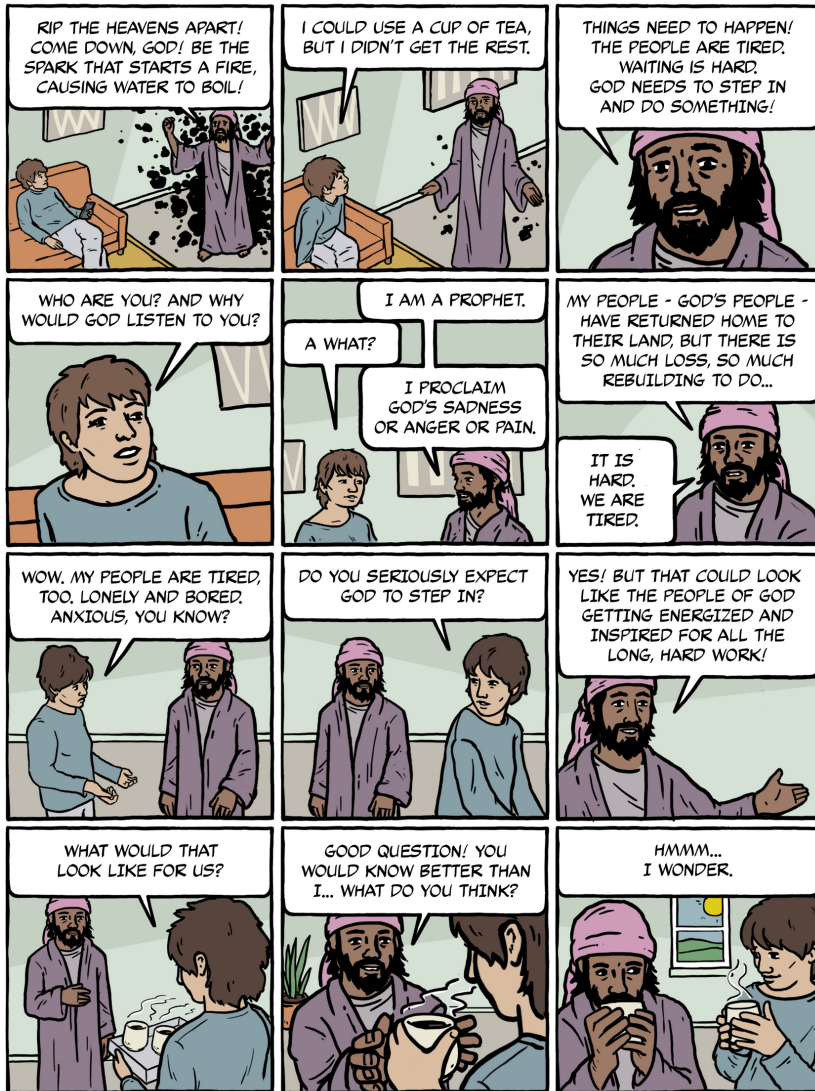
Icing

- For the icing, whisk 1.5 cups icing sugar, ½ tsp vanilla, 1 tsp corn syrup, and 2 tablespoons of water in a medium bowl. It should be quite thick. If it is much too thick, add ½ Tablespoon more water. If it is much too thin, add 2 more Tablespoons of confectioners' sugar. If you drizzle a little of the icing with the whisk, the ribbon of icing will hold for a few seconds before melting back into the icing. If not decorating right away, cover the icing tightly and keep in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.
- Decorate the cooled cookies however you'd like. You may enjoy right away or you can wait 24 hours for the icing to set and harden— no need to cover the cookies as the icing sets. Once the icing has set, these cookies are great for gifting. ✨

PREPARING THE LIGHT ADVENT

"A PROPHET FOR TEA"

Words by Shannon Tennant. Art by Jacob Dewey.



ISAIAH 64

Selected Verses, modified from Contemporary English Version

RIP THE HEAVENS APART!
COME DOWN, GOD; MAKE THE MOUNTAINS
TREMBLE.
BE A SPARK THAT STARTS A FIRE CAUSING
WATER TO BOIL.
THEN YOUR ENEMIES WILL KNOW WHO YOU
ARE;
ALL NATIONS WILL BE IN AWE BECAUSE YOU
ARE NEARBY.
YOUR AWESOME DEEDS HAVE COMPLETELY
AMAZED US;
EVEN THE MOUNTAINS SHAKE WHEN YOU
COME DOWN.
YOU ARE THE ONLY GOD EVER SEEN OR
HEARD OF
WHO WORKS MIRACLES FOR YOUR
FOLLOWERS...
YOU, GOD, ARE OUR CREATOR.
WE ARE NOTHING BUT CLAY, BUT YOU ARE
THE POTTER WHO MOLDED US.
DON'T BE SO FURIOUS OR KEEP OUR SINS IN
YOUR THOUGHTS FOREVER!
REMEMBER THAT ALL OF US ARE YOUR
PEOPLE. ✨

#ADVENTWREATHCHALLENGEPMRC

Christian Advent wreaths are a tradition in many homes, and common to see in sanctuaries for worship. There are many ways to set up an advent wreath at your home. Join the **PMRC Advent Wreath Challenge** by creating an advent wreath for your home and posting a photo of it to Instagram. Use items *already in your home* - don't go out and purchase what you don't have! Recreate and imagine something from what you find at home. Share a photo of your creations on your church's social media (email it to your minister or church secretary) or your own Instagram account. Tag it with this hashtag so we can find your wreath: **#AdventWreathChallengePMRC** ✨



Photo: Kelly Sikkema

A WAY OF LIGHTING ADVENT CANDLES, FOR HOME

Christian Advent Wreaths have four candles to light, one on each Sunday of Advent, and one white candle to light on Christmas Day. In the United Church of Canada, our practice is to have three blue candles, one pink candle, and one white candle: Blue for Hope and Peace, Pink for Joy, Blue for Love, and White to celebrate the birth of Christ, the Light of the World. We invite you to mark the journey of Advent to Christmas using the Advent Candle Liturgy as a way of lighting Advent candles in your home. ✨



ADVENT CANDLE LITURGY

Adapted by the liturgy written by Andrew Schwartz
processandfaith.org

ADVENT ONE: HOPE

The Gospel of John speaks of Christ as the true light coming into the world – *what has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.* (John 1: 4-5)

In commemoration of that coming, we light candles for the four weeks leading to Christmas and reflect on the coming of Christ. Christ is always coming, always entering a troubled world, a wounded heart, a hopeful soul. We light the first candle, the candle of hope, to express our longing for wholeness, for healing, and the well-being of all creation.

What do you hope for? (share together)

Prayer:

**Loving God, as we enter this Advent season,
We open all the dark places in our lives and
memories to the healing light of Christ.
Show us the creative power of hope.
Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you,
That we may walk in the light of Christ.
Amen**

ADVENT TWO: PEACE

Last week, we lit the first candle—the candle of hope. Today we also light the second candle, the candle of peace. We light it knowing full well that peace is hard to find, and in some parts of the world, it is almost completely absent. Yet in this season of Advent, we trust that God is never absent from us. God is always preparing something new. And even where there is war and discord, whether between countries, within families, or within our own hearts, God is present, gently leading us to new possibilities.

Where you see people working for peace?
(share together)

Prayer:

**Loving God, we thank you for the hope and peace
you unfailingly offer us.
Show us the creative power of hope.
Teach us the peace that comes from justice.
Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you,
That we may walk in the light of Christ.
Amen**

ADVENT CANDLE LITURGY continued

ADVENT THREE: JOY

We have lit the first two candles, one for hope and one for peace. Today we also light the third candle, the candle of joy. This should be the easy one, because joy is all around us—in people, the lights, the music, the gathering together. But how often do we let our preparations—or our memories—push joy to the side? Joy is like an underground spring that wells up within us, but joy is also a choice, an attitude. Like a muscle, it needs to be exercised. So today we open ourselves to joy, trusting that God has already planted it in us.

What joy is springing up in you today? (*share together*)

Prayer:

Loving God, we open ourselves to you, trusting that this is how you made us: you created us for joy-filled hearts and lives. Show us the creative power of hope. Teach us the peace that comes from justice. Fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you, That we may walk in the light of Christ. Amen.

ADVENT FOUR: LOVE

We have lit three candles—for hope, for peace, and for joy. Today we also light the fourth candle—the candle of love. With this flame we signify the love of God that surrounds and fills us at all times, but that we recognize in a special way in the Christmas story. There is no greater power than love. It is stronger than rulers and empires, stronger than grief or despair, stronger even than death. We love because God loves us.

What gift of love have you received from someone else? (*share together*)

Prayer:

Loving God, we open ourselves to you this Christmas season. As these candles are lit, light our lives with your imagination. Show us the creative power of hope. Teach us the peace that comes from justice. Fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared. Magnify your love within us. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you, That we may walk in the light of Christ. Amen.

CHRISTMAS: EVE OR DAY



The Advent time of waiting and preparing is over! Hope, peace, joy, and love. Four candles, four promises continually offered to us by God, and all of them manifest in this one we light tonight: the Christ candle. In Christ we find the creative power of hope, peace that comes from justice, the kind of joy that cannot be contained but must be shared and a love is magnified. In Christ we find light and life, and the courage to be like him, answering his call and following in his footsteps

The light reminds us that God promises to be with us, to comfort us, to help us rejoice and to teach us to love. Today we light the Christ candle to remind us of all God has done for us.

Prayer:

Holy One, We rejoice in your presence in our lives, and in God's unique presence in the life of Jesus of Nazareth—born of Mary, growing through childhood into an adult ministry, in all his life revealing the peace, love, and justice of God; Come to us, Lord Jesus, Be born in us this night, in our hearts, our minds, our lives. May the light of your life be kindled in us, And lead us to the shining truth, of God with us, God for us, God in us. Amen. ✨



Photo: Tressa Brotsky

HIDE AND SEEK WITH BABY JESUS

Advent is a time when we prepare for the coming of Jesus. This craft and ritual can help prepare us to receive the light and love that Jesus brings to the world. It can remind us how to walk in Jesus' way.

Use modelling material to create a baby Jesus that you can add to your worship space on Christmas Eve. The picture shows a simple roll of clay around a ball of clay, but the possibilities for how to create your baby Jesus are many! Please let your creativity flow as you make your very own baby Jesus.

During the days of advent consider playing hide and seek with Jesus. One member of your household can hide the baby and have others look for it. Once someone has found the baby consider the question "How did I show Jesus' love today?" ✨

HOUSEHOLD ADVENT CHRISTMAS SCAVENGER HUNT

See if you can find these symbols and traditions of Christmas in your home! Check off the ones you can find!



Star - reminds us of the star in the sky that led the Wise Ones to Jesus



Gifts - reminds us of the gift of Jesus, the gifts the Wise Ones gave Jesus and the gifts we share with others



Evergreen - reminds us of the never ending love of God and represents hope. Most of our Christmas trees are evergreen.



Wreath - reminds us of the endless love of God. How many other symbols can you find fastened to your wreath?



Donkey - reminds us of the long journey Mary and Joseph had to take to get to Bethlehem where Jesus was born



Manger - reminds us where the Prince of Peace was born - not in a royal palace but in a stable at the back of an inn.



Candles and Christmas Lights - represent Christ, the Light of the World. They also remind us to be lights for others.



Bells - sing out the joy of the birth of the Prince of Peace!



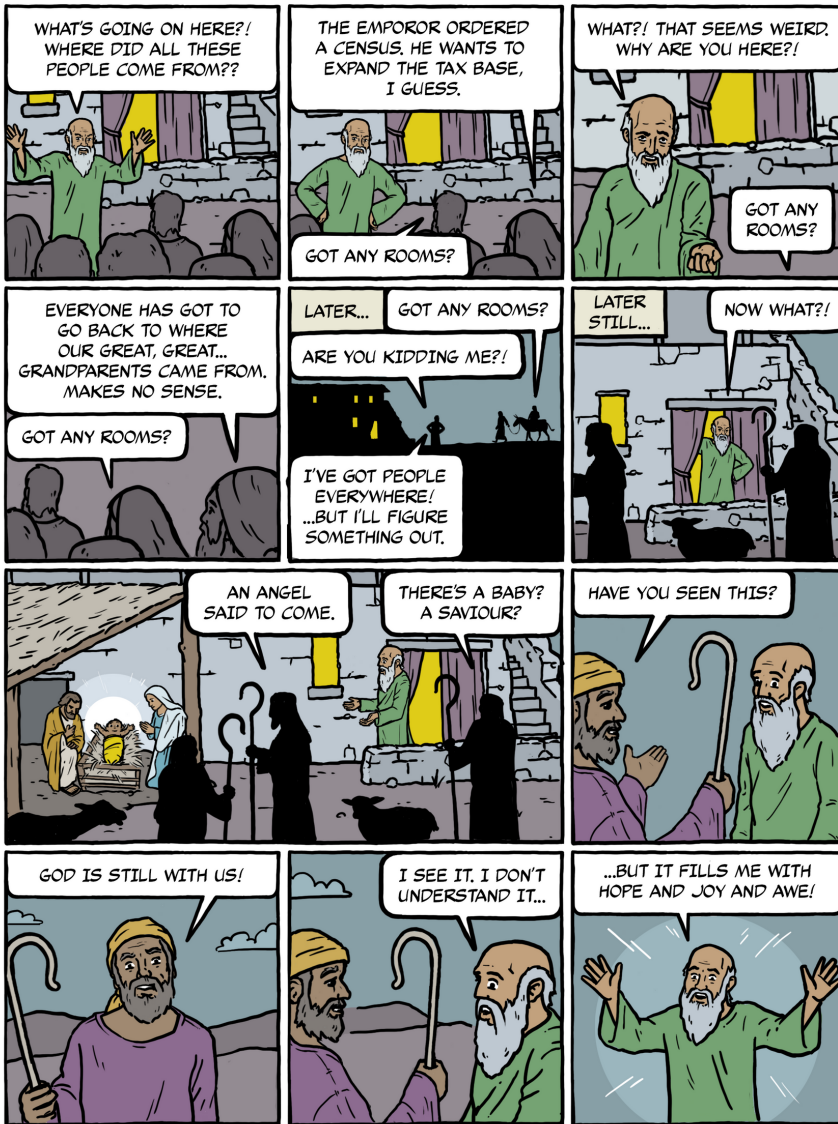
Candy Canes - shaped like a shepherds crook, reminding us that the Good Shepherd, Jesus came at Christmas and remind us of the shepherds watching their flocks at night and hearing the good news!



Angels - God's messengers - they were a big part of sharing the good news of the birth of Jesus with many people!! ✨

CELEBRATING THE LIGHT CHRISTMAS

"GOT ANY ROOMS" Words by Shannon Tennant. Art by Jacob Dewey.



LUKE 2:1-20

Contemporary English Version

ABOUT THAT TIME EMPEROR AUGUSTUS GAVE ORDERS FOR THE NAMES OF ALL THE PEOPLE TO BE LISTED IN RECORD BOOKS. THESE FIRST RECORDS WERE MADE WHEN QUIRINIUS WAS GOVERNOR OF SYRIA. EVERYONE HAD TO GO TO THEIR OWN HOMETOWN TO BE LISTED. SO JOSEPH HAD TO LEAVE NAZARETH IN GALILEE AND GO TO BETHLEHEM IN JUDEA. LONG AGO BETHLEHEM HAD BEEN KING DAVID'S HOMETOWN, AND JOSEPH WENT THERE BECAUSE HE WAS FROM DAVID'S FAMILY. MARY WAS ENGAGED TO JOSEPH AND TRAVELED WITH HIM TO BETHLEHEM. SHE WAS SOON GOING TO HAVE A BABY, AND WHILE THEY WERE THERE, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO HER FIRST-BORN SON. SHE DRESSED HIM IN BABY CLOTHES AND LAID HIM ON A BED OF HAY, BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM IN THE INN. THAT NIGHT IN THE FIELDS NEAR BETHLEHEM SOME SHEPHERDS WERE GUARDING THEIR SHEEP. ALL AT ONCE AN ANGEL CAME DOWN TO THEM FROM THE LORD, AND THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE LORD'S GLORY FLASHED AROUND THEM. THE SHEPHERDS WERE FRIGHTENED. BUT THE ANGEL SAID, "DON'T BE AFRAID! I HAVE GOOD NEWS FOR YOU, WHICH WILL MAKE EVERYONE HAPPY. THIS VERY DAY IN KING DAVID'S HOMETOWN A SAVIOR WAS BORN FOR YOU. HE IS CHRIST THE LORD. YOU WILL KNOW WHO HE IS, BECAUSE YOU WILL FIND HIM DRESSED IN BABY CLOTHES AND LYING ON A BED OF HAY." SUDDENLY MANY OTHER ANGELS CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND JOINED IN PRAISING GOD. THEY SAID: "PRAISE GOD IN HEAVEN! PEACE ON EARTH TO EVERYONE WHO PLEASES GOD." AFTER THE ANGELS HAD LEFT AND GONE BACK TO HEAVEN, THE SHEPHERDS SAID TO EACH OTHER, "LET'S GO TO BETHLEHEM AND SEE WHAT THE LORD HAS TOLD US ABOUT." THEY HURRIED OFF AND FOUND MARY AND JOSEPH, AND THEY SAW THE BABY LYING ON A BED OF HAY. WHEN THE SHEPHERDS SAW JESUS, THEY TOLD HIS PARENTS WHAT THE ANGEL HAD SAID ABOUT HIM. EVERYONE LISTENED AND WERE SURPRISED. BUT MARY KEPT THINKING ABOUT ALL THIS AND WONDERING WHAT IT MEANT. AS THE SHEPHERDS RETURNED TO THEIR SHEEP, THEY WERE PRAISING GOD AND SAYING WONDERFUL THINGS ABOUT HIM. EVERYTHING THEY HAD SEEN AND HEARD WAS JUST AS THE ANGEL HAD SAID. ✨

TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS PAPER CHAIN

During the season of Christmas you are invited to pause and reflect on the non-material gifts you can give to others in your family and your neighbourhood.

Materials Needed: 12 strips of paper, Markers, Glue stick

Directions: Use markers to draw or write onto strips of paper gifts that you bring to the world by being you. Your gifts might include the gift of time, or patience, or listening, or helpfulness. You can start to create the chain on Christmas day, and finish it one loop a day, for the twelve days following Christmas. As you create your chain links, give thanks to God and ask for God's guidance in sharing your gifts. ✨



FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN - DANCE PARTY?

We don't usually associate dance parties with 18th century classical music but why not?!

The *Hallelujah Chorus* is the most famous part of Handel's *Messiah*, which was actually written for Easter - but it has lots more great pieces including *For Unto Us a Child Is Born* which is based on words from Isaiah 9:6-7, and feels very Seasonal. Find a recording of Handel's *For Unto Us a Child is Born* on YouTube, and have a family dance party!

Most carols were originally meant to be danced, you can make up actions to go with the different repeat phrases in *For Unto Us a Child is Born*. What would make a good action to go with *Wonderful Counsellor*? *Prince of Peace*? *Eternal Parent*? What does it look like to have 'the Government Upon His Shoulders'? How would you move if a newborn child was handed to you? Handel uses the words he knew at the time, so you might want to update them to be more inclusive.

If dancing is not your happy place, try another way of expressing how the music feels to you. You could write the words that pop into your head all over a big blank piece of paper. You could write a poem - it might include some words from the song or it might not. You could draw or paint a picture of what you hear and how it feels. You could sculpt with clay or blocks or other things you find around the house.

Or maybe you'd like to lie absolutely still on the floor and just let the music wash over you. Or something altogether different. The best thing about listening to music at home is that there are a lot of ways to listen! ✨

MAKE YOUR OWN WRAPPING PAPER

Making your own wrapping paper is a fun and creative way to wrap your gift in something unique to you! There are so many ways of making your own. Here are a few of our favourite tips!

Materials needed

- Paper: Can be newspaper, brown grocery bags, printer paper, or whatever you have on hand! Test that the paper will fit around your gift
- Liquid paint: your choice of colour!
- Trap for the paint
- Stamping/ printing materials from around the house as suggested below

Ways to make prints on your wrapping paper

- Use Q-tips to make a polka dot pattern
- Wrap some bubble wrap around a rolling pin and roll onto paper
- Cut a lemon in half, then use it as a stamp for a bright design
- Create a potato stamp for a more hands-on activity
- Cookie cutters create a delicate pattern
- Cut a kitchen sponge apart, dip it into paint, then use it as a stamp
- Traditional rubber stamps make for a quick print
- Paint your own designs with a paintbrush or your own hands! ✨

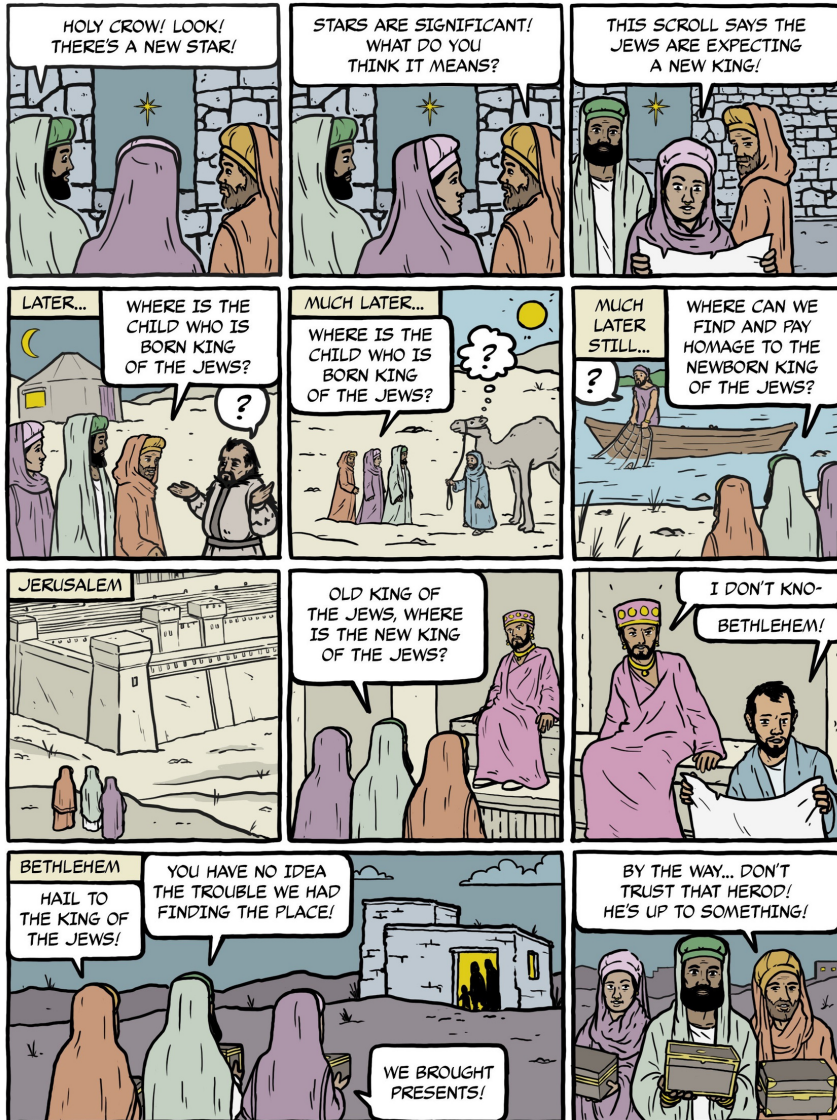
STAR GAZING

There is something quite miraculous about a clear night sky, mysterious and wonder in the making, God's creative Spirit at work! Start by making sure you are dressed for the weather; have a warm blanket to lay on the ground and some hot chocolate or tea in a thermos nearby. You can simply gaze up taking in the beauty of the sky or choose an app for your phone. **Star Walk 2** or **Skyview** or **Star Tracker** apps use your phone's sensors and GPS to show a map of the night sky in real time, pinpointing the location of stars, planets, constellations, comets, the ISS and satellites. In addition, they have a time travel option to observe what the sky looked like in the past, and might look like in the future. ✨

REVEALING THE LIGHT

EPIPHANY

"NEW STAR" Words by Shannon Tennant. Art by Jacob Dewey.



MATTHEW 2:1-12

Contemporary English Version

WHEN JESUS WAS BORN IN THE VILLAGE OF BETHLEHEM IN JUDEA, HEROD WAS KING. DURING THIS TIME SOME WISE MEN FROM THE EAST CAME TO JERUSALEM AND SAID, "WHERE IS THE CHILD BORN TO BE KING OF THE JEWS? WE SAW HIS STAR IN THE EAST AND HAVE COME TO WORSHIP HIM." WHEN KING HEROD HEARD ABOUT THIS, HE WAS WORRIED, AND SO WAS EVERYONE ELSE IN JERUSALEM. HEROD BROUGHT TOGETHER THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE TEACHERS OF THE LAW OF MOSES AND ASKED THEM, "WHERE WILL THE MESSIAH BE BORN?" THEY TOLD HIM, "HE WILL BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM, JUST AS THE PROPHET WROTE, 'BETHLEHEM IN THE LAND OF JUDEA, FROM YOUR TOWN WILL COME A LEADER, WHO WILL BE LIKE A SHEPHERD FOR MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'" HEROD SECRETLY CALLED IN THE WISE MEN AND ASKED THEM WHEN THEY HAD FIRST SEEN THE STAR. HE TOLD THEM, "GO TO BETHLEHEM AND SEARCH CAREFULLY FOR THE CHILD. AS SOON AS YOU FIND HIM, LET ME KNOW. I WANT TO GO AND WORSHIP HIM TOO." THE WISE MEN LISTENED TO WHAT THE KING SAID AND THEN LEFT. AND THE STAR THEY HAD SEEN IN THE EAST WENT ON AHEAD OF THEM UNTIL IT STOPPED OVER THE PLACE WHERE THE CHILD WAS. THEY WERE THRILLED AND EXCITED TO SEE THE STAR. WHEN THE MEN WENT INTO THE HOUSE AND SAW THE CHILD WITH MARY, HIS MOTHER, THEY KNELT DOWN AND WORSHIPED HIM. THEY TOOK OUT THEIR GIFTS OF GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH AND GAVE THEM TO HIM. LATER THEY WERE WARNED IN A DREAM NOT TO RETURN TO HEROD, AND THEY WENT BACK HOME BY ANOTHER ROAD. ✨



CHALKING THE DOOR

Over 2000 years ago the Magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar travelled over a great distance, following a wild Star until they 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. It helps us to remember God is with us, always. 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 + 21**. The C M B also stands for the Latin prayer request, *Christus Mansionem Benedicat, May Christ bless this house*. A blessing for your home is on the next page. ✨



A Blessing for Our Home

Loving God, Bless all who come into
our home

May all who enter in come in peace

May all who come in this door find
welcome and love

May peace and love fill our home and
spread out into the community and
the world. ✨



Photo: NordWood Themes

BAKE AN EPIPHANY CAKE ON JANUARY 6, 2021

Epiphany cakes hold different meanings in different cultures, regions, and churches—they're often called King Cakes or Wise One Cakes, and they celebrate the day of Epiphany, or the Twelfth Night. This night marks the arrival of the three wise ones in Bethlehem who deliver gifts to Jesus and pay him *homage* (an other word for respect or honour). In a traditional Epiphany cake, there is a gift baked into the cake and there are many ideas of what that gift could be! Some bake a very clean loonie into the cake or a mini crown or a dried bean. Just make sure everyone who is eating cake knows to look through their piece before they start eating. Whoever finds the gift in their piece of the cake is the 'Wise One of Epiphany' and has to make the cake next year!! ✨



DECK THE HALLS WITH STARS

Somewhere in your house you probably have star shaped decorations. Or you have things to make them out of: cardboard, cookie dough, modeling clay or even wool. You can make them fancy or plain. You can find a pattern to crochet them. You can bake them and ice them. You can make them big or small. Or you can find star shaped trees ornaments and use those.

Spread those stars, all the different kinds, all around the house. You could create a Star Hunt for other people in the family. You could all take turns hiding them in different places or just rearranging them in the rooms where they are. However you decide to do it, in the end, they will surprise you. Just like the new, wild star surprised the Magi who decided to set out to find out what it meant. ✨

CHRISTMAS OR NEW YEAR'S EVE CRACKERS

Materials Needed

- Wrapping paper – homemade or bought!
- Scissors
- Tape (Double-sided sticky tape works well)
- Three 2.5" long cardboard tube sections for each cracker
- Cracker snap inserts
- Tissue paper in festive colours
- Ribbon or string
- Star stickers and other decorations!
- Gifts to put inside the crackers

Directions

- 1) Place the 3 tube sections end to end on a piece of wrapping paper, plain side up. Slide a cracker snap through the 3 tubes and secure it to the middle tube only.
- 2) Cut your wrapping paper so that it reaches around the tube (with overlap for taping up) and extends the length of the 3 tubes.
- 3) Place 3 separate pieces of double-sided tape along the sealing edge of the wrapping paper, each bit of tape aligned with each section of tubes.
- 3) Align the tubes at the un-taped edge of the wrapping paper. Wrap the paper around the tubes to completely cover. Overlap the double-sided tape edge and press down to stick firmly. Decorate the wrapped tubes with star stickers.
- 4) Gently pull the two end-pieces of tube sections slightly away from the middle. In the tiny space made on ONE side, tie your ribbon around the paper with a loose knot and gently tighten to create your cracker end. Remove the piece of tube and continue to tighten until there is only a small gap when you look down the end of the cracker. Tie a bow and cut any excess ribbon.
- 5) Fill your cracker with chosen goodies and then repeat Step 4 on the still-open end of your cracker. ✨

UNFOLDING LIGHT: EPIPHANY

**Magi came from the east to
Jerusalem asking,
"Where is the child who is born
king of the Jews?"**
– Matthew 2.2

The king of the Jews?
Why would they care about someone
from a different nation, culture and
religion?
Maybe in their wisdom they knew love
when they saw it.
Nothing could make Jesus king of
everybody
but being the king of love.

And so he was.
He was not king of power or might,
king of influence or success,
social standing or privilege,
king of being right or righteous.
He was king of justice and mercy,
of compassion and healing,
of gentleness and reverence.
And wise ones knew:
love is the greatest power in the world.
They were willing to kneel to a higher
power.

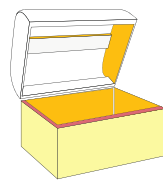
This is the epiphany, the revelation:
your culture or nationality or religion
don't matter.
Your doctrine doesn't matter.
Your religion is simply how you treat
people.
Wise ones know love when they see it.

Pray for wisdom.
Pray for love.
Pray to be ruled
by the Prince of Peace,
the King of Love.

*This reflection is from UnfoldingLight.org, a
daily reflection by Steve Garnaas-Holmes that's
rooted in a contemplative, Creation-centered,
justice-oriented spirituality. You can subscribe
to receive these daily reflections by email.* ✨

EPIPHANY PRAYER BOX

Find a small box and decorate it with paint, decorative paper, and glue treasure-like items like beads, jewels, gold cord. Place the box in a prominent place. Put some slips of paper and markers near the box, and make a sign that reads "God, I thank you for the gift of..." Add a prayer to the Epiphany Prayer Box whenever you think of it. Write or draw your prayer on the



slips of paper and place them in the Epiphany Prayer Box. Choose a time with your family members to revisit the prayers added to the box, praying them again, all together - maybe on Ash Wednesday? ✨

ANCIENT TERMS IN CONTEXT: KING OF THE JEWS

Matthew's is the most Jewish Gospel and the most committed to establishing that Jesus is the anticipated Messiah-King, a king in a way that no one was really expecting. This is why the Magi from far away come: to fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 60 that '**Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn**'. The anticipated King was to be a descendent of King David. He would be anointed by God, and therefore a Messiah. The word Messiah comes from the Hebrew word "anoint", as does the Greek word Christ. The Messiah-King would establish God's reign of peace through justice. Because the Ancient Near Eastern vision of how kings took control was based on experience, the assumption, language and imagery around the Messiah-King was that this would also be a Warrior-King. Herod-the-King-of-the-Jews was a whole different ball game. He had been appointed by Rome because he had some Jewish blood, and was ruthless enough to impose the Roman peace through victory by whatever means necessary. The writer of the Gospel of Matthew only uses the title *King of the Jews* in two contexts: in this story of the Birth, and in the Crucifixion story. In between texts shows the reader what the writer believes it means to be the Messiah-King. So when you read it here, with the Magi traveling all that way, Herod threatened, and the wild star in the sky, think about what you'd expect. And then, when you hear it at Easter, wonder what it means. What kind of King is this? And how is the Messiah's peace different from Rome's? ✨



STAR LUMINARIES

Light shines in the darkness. Create a star luminary that will bring light to the darkness.

PAPER BAG LUMINARY

Materials Needed

- Paper Lunch Bag
- Pencil
- Darning Needle
- Sand
- LED Tea light

Directions

- Draw a star onto the paper bag
- Use darning needle to poke holes on outline of the star (and throughout star if you wish)
- Put approximately 1 cup of sand in bottom of bag
- Place LED tealight into the center of the sand ✨



Photo: gigglesgalore.net

TIN CAN LUMINARY

Materials Needed

- Tin Can
- Nail
- Hammer
- Sharpie Marker
- LED Tea Light

Directions

- Ensure can has been carefully washed and dried before beginning
- Cover the raw edge of the can with masking or duct tape (can be removed when finished)
- Draw a starry-like pattern onto the can
- Lay can on side and use the nail and hammer to punch holes along star outline
- Place candle in bottom of can ✨



Photo: @diyncrafts

FAITH TABLE TALK CARDS ~ ADVENT CHRISTMAS EPIPHANY

A set of seasonal Faith Table Talk Cards are available, separately from this magazine. It's a sheet of cards that you get to prepare for your household! We wonder what kinds of conversations you will have with your household, using these Seeking Light Faith Table Talk Cards! Gathering 'round a table for food and conversation is something that humans have been doing for thousands of years. In all the tellings of Jesus's life, he gathered with people for meals, shared time with friends, and with strangers - those often ignored by everyone else. Imagine what kind of conversations they might have had! ✨

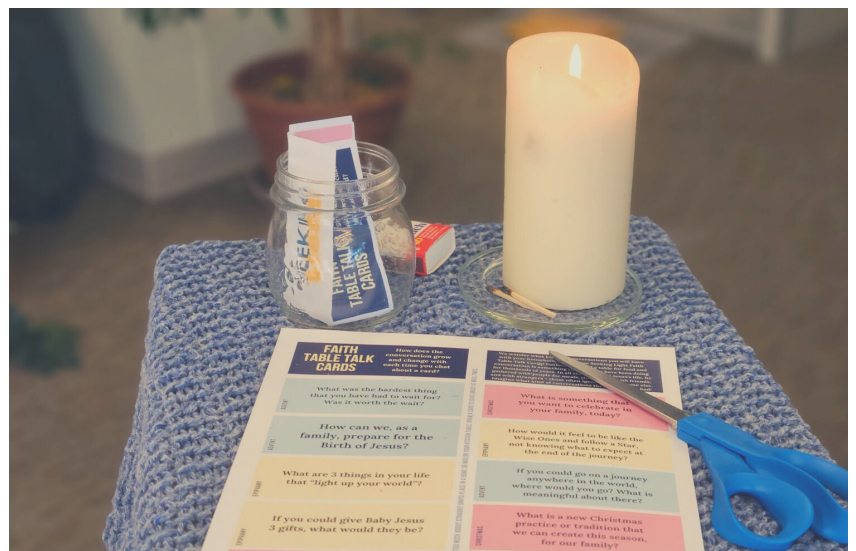


Photo: Samantha Jones

SEEKING LIGHT



A UNITED CHURCH FAITH@HOME ADVENT CALENDAR

HOPE

Light the Advent candle of HOPE

[Online worship \(Click!\)](#)

[Virtual Coffe Hour 11am](#)

SUNDAY 29

Gather 4 candles for Advent and light the candle of HOPE. See page 7.



30

Make a decoration or write a prayer for HOPE and add it to the tree outside the church.



1

Check out UCC Gifts of Vision Catalogue, giftswithvision.ca or help those affected by the pandemic in the Global South by donating at united-church.ca

2



Sing Christmas carols from the *Park, Porch & Sidewalk Sings* songbook outdoors, and try recording yourselves singing!

3

Set up your nativity set (without the baby!) with Mary & Joseph across the room, and the Magi far away. Start moving Mary & Joseph to Bethlehem & see p. 4.



4

Make your own Star Luminaries! See page 15.



5

PEACE

Light the Advent candle of PEACE

[Online worship](#)

[Virtual Coffe Hour 11am](#)

SUNDAY 6

Make a decoration or write a prayer for PEACE and add it to the tree outside the church.



7

Send a note, make a picture, create a Christmas card for your local seniors residence!

Donate food or funds to a local food bank.

8

Download *Table Talk Cards* here: <https://cutt.ly/tabletalk> cut them up and use them to have great talks at meal time or any time!

9

Remind yourself of the activities in the Seeking Light magazine, and enjoy doing one today.

10

Read about how the prophets help us get ready for Christmas on page 8.

11

Go through your closets and drawers. Donate your warm, clean and gently used winter clothing to your local mission, ourplacesociety.com or firstunited.ca

12

JOY

Light the Advent candle of JOY

[Online worship](#)

[Virtual Coffe Hour 11am](#)

SUNDAY 13

Make a decoration or write a prayer for JOY and add it to the tree outside the church.



14

Check out Kiva Microcredit Gifts kiva.org

Pick up litter at a local park!

15

Write yourself a note of the things you're love and appreciate about yourself, this 2020.

16

What is a tradition you would like to start this year in your household?

17

Play Hide and Seek with Baby Jesus, or have an Advent Scavenger Hunt.

See page 9.

18

Bake some goodies and share with a friend or neighbour. Please make sure you are being careful to follow CoVid guidelines!

19

LOVE

Light the Advent candle of LOVE

[Online worship](#)

[Virtual Coffe Hour 11am](#)

SUNDAY 20

Send a note of thanks to your minister(s), staff and volunteer leaders.

21

Make a decoration or write a prayer for LOVE and add it to the tree outside the church.



22

Go for a walk, check out Christmas lights in your neighbourhood!

23

CHRISTMAS EVE

Worship online or share together the Christmas Eve/ Day Household Worship

24

CHRIST IS BORN!

3XWkag abW kagd YXd dSV fZWfak aX <Vga T[dZ' See page #' ~ #S

25