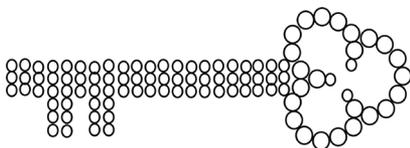
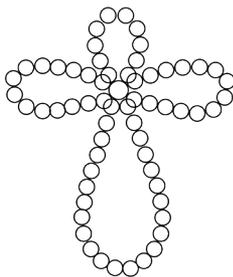
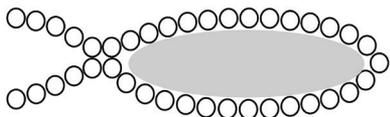
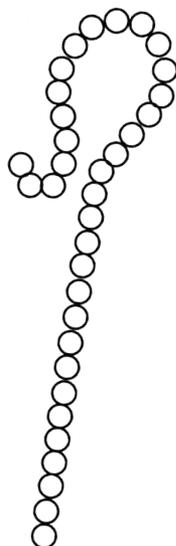
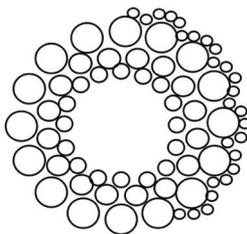
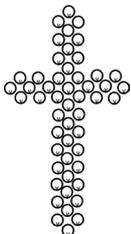
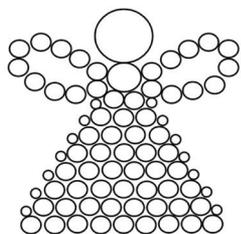
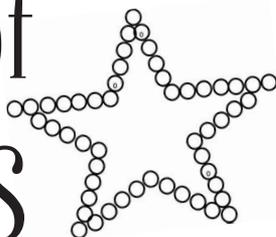




Good Tidings!
presents



The Message of Chrismons



Devotions for Advent 2022

New Philadelphia Moravian Church



Dear Friends,

We've all heard it said that a picture is worth a thousand words. That saying most likely comes from a quote by the playwright, Henrik Ibsen. He wrote, "A thousand words leave not the same deep impression as does a single deed." Deeds and pictures share something in common. They are both visual and tangible expressions of a thought or truth.

As Christians, we believe that the Word of God took on human form in the Living Word — Jesus. Jesus was God in visible, tangible, human form; a living picture of God — God in... deed!

Jesus used lots of images and word pictures to describe himself. He called himself a *vine*, the living *water*, a *door*, the *light*, and many other images.

Familiar images — images that we can understand — also help us understand more clearly who Jesus is and what Jesus wants us to know. It can be very helpful to be able to focus on fish and fire and stars and lambs and shepherd's crooks and keys and candles and butterflies and crowns and crosses instead of trying to fully understand concepts such as redemption and forgiveness and grace and truth using words alone.

In this devotional guide, words, pictures, tangible images and deeds all come together in a beautiful way. Many of you took part in the wonderful work (or deed!) of creating Chrismon ornaments — things that we can see and touch. Some of you wrote down words (less than a thousand!) that can help us apply these images and biblical truths in our lives. Some of you created pictures that others will color as they reflect on what these images mean.

My prayer is that this Advent Devotional Guide will help to give us a clear and meaningful image of the one whom we celebrate during the Advent season — the one who is the image of the invisible God:
Jesus Christ, God with us!

Pastor Sam

Chrismons: GUIDING THE ADVENT SEASON

The word "Chrismon" is a contraction of two Latin words, "Christi monogramma," or monogram of Christ. Chrismons represent Jesus by interpreting ancient symbols associated with His life and ministry, and developing them into designs for ornaments. Christ's followers from the beginning have used symbols; they are part of our heritage, too, reminding us of the One who died for us and, through our faith, saves us.

The popularity of Chrismons can be traced to Frances Spencer who began designing ornaments in 1957 for her home church, the Lutheran Church of the Ascension, in Danville, Virginia. Her purpose was to remind Christians of the real meaning of Christmas, and she was very intentional in the symbols she chose to convey this important message. Each ornament points to Jesus. Each ornament tells part of His Story.

Chrismons are always in combinations of white and gold. White refers to Christ's purity and perfection; gold exemplifies His majesty and glory. As you gaze upon and examine our Chrismon tree, here are some of the symbols you will see:



The **butterfly** is a symbol of the resurrection and new life.



The **Celtic cross** distinguishes itself from others with the addition of a circle around its axis. It is beloved especially in Ireland and throughout Great Britain.



The **circle** is a symbol for eternity, for perfection and for wholeness.



The **fish** was used by early Christians to secretly communicate where the Lord's Supper was to be served or where other Christians might be gathering. In Greek, the word for fish is "ichthys" which also stood for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."



The symbol for **infinity**, indicating eternity, immortality and continuity, is reimagined as a Chrismon. Superimpose a vertical infinity symbol on a traditional horizontal one and the resulting figure will resemble a **cross**. As you view this symbol on our Chrismon tree, reflect on the Father and the Son, one being a continuation of the other, and in perfect unity.



The **Iota Chi** shows two Greek letters: "iota" which is the first letter in the Greek name for Jesus, and the "chi," the first letter in "Christ."



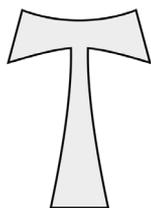
The **Lamb of God** is perhaps the best-known symbol representing the Son of God. The lamb always carries a banner, symbolizing victory over death. The head is always surrounded by a nimbus, signifying divinity. Look closely to find the two "Lamb of God" ornaments on our tree.



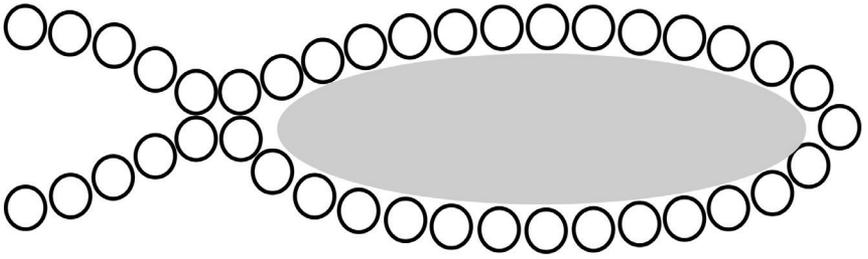
A broad definition of the **Latin cross** is any cross with a "vertical bar intersected by a shorter horizontal bar above its midpoint." Our Chrismon tree features many variations of the Latin cross.



The 5-pointed **star** has several monikers, including **Star of Bethlehem**, **Star of Jacob** and **Star of the Epiphany**.



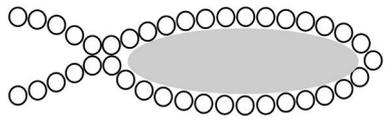
The **Tau cross**, shaped like a capital "T," is an ancient symbol and mentioned in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel (you'll find it in the ninth chapter). Some people speculate that Jesus was crucified on this cross because it allowed the "criminal" to be placed higher, thus providing greater visibility for those witnessing the execution. St. Francis used this cross, even making it part of his signature. Several of our ornaments incorporate the Tau cross. It is also seen with a serpent surrounding it. (Look up John 3:14).



The Fish

Draw a fish for each member of your family.

A large, empty rounded rectangle with a thin black border, intended for drawing a fish for each family member.



DAY 1: Sunday, November 27

One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers — Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew — throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” MATTHEW 4:18-19 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

Have you ever wondered why Jesus called ordinary fishermen to work so closely with Him and why He was willing to spend the next three years of His life with them. There were plenty of men who knew the Scriptures very well, who were more educated, who had lived the traditions forever. There were people too who had higher status and more money.

The criteria of status, education, and money, though, is not what Jesus needed. He wanted folks whom he knew He could train, ones who would follow Him, those who could and would make a commitment to Him. He wasn't concerned that they would seek their own glory, but would be willing to trust and go with Him.

The name Simon in Hebrew means “to hear” and could also mean “to understand or obey” which is what Simon did when Jesus issued the invitation. Jesus knew that Simon would give his heart to the task because he heard, he “got it”, he understood and would obey.

When Jesus changes Simon's name to Peter, it reminds us that others in the Bible had a name change when they had had an encounter with God. The name given by Jesus, Peter, means “Rock” in Greek. We have seen that Peter seems to be reactive, quick to speak what is on his mind, and you wonder why Jesus is confident in his choice. Could Peter (and Andrew) learn anything new, something besides fishing? But Jesus had the knowledge that both men could be fishers of men. Peter, particularly, the Rock, will accomplish much for the Kingdom, and both will fish for and catch the lost.

As we read this passage, we wonder why it is recorded here, how can we use it today. In our day-to-day lives, we are not

professionals and we don't know how to reach "the lost", or even who they are. But God knows our skills/abilities, our lives, and contacts – He even knows our weak points. If He could use a simple lowly fisherman to accomplish the huge tasks He did, then He can use us as long as we have the same commitment and willingness that these men had. Peter grew to become the founder of the church; we can help carry it forward.

PRAYER: *Dear God, thank you for the early leaders of your ministry. Give us the willingness of Simon and Andrew and use our gifts and talents, on a daily basis, to further your ministry.*

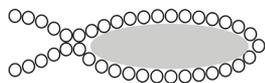
Nancy Holland

DAY 2: Monday, November 28

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. He then gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. MARK 6:41 NIV

With the five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus fed 5,000 men plus women and children who had come to hear him teach. This act was one of Jesus's most significant miracles as it is the only one mentioned in all four Gospels. The scripture describes the contrast in attitudes between Jesus and his disciples as they wanted the people to leave and find their own food, but Jesus said they were to feed the people. The disciples learned that their mission from then on was to teach and provide, not turn away. They were to grow the Christian Church. They were to be fishers of men. Jesus showed that anything is possible if you put yourself in His hands. As with the bread and fish, little will become much.

The fish in this scripture is about more than just food. The fish is one of the oldest, and most significant symbols in Christianity. The fish, *vesica piscis*, was the symbol of life and was often



used as a secret code during the first century by persecuted Christians to identify themselves as Christians or to show where religious services were to be held. They would create the image with their foot in the ground.

Today, the symbol of the fish is still evident in Christianity as it represents Salvation in Christ through water Baptism. The fish symbol also is one of the Christmon symbols that adorn our Christmas trees and it is often displayed on automobiles to show the drivers faith.

PRAYER: *Father in Heaven, please be with us as we prepare to celebrate the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for the forgiveness of sin and the salvation that he provides. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

Bob Rustad

DAY 3: Tuesday, November 29

Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. MATTHEW 13:47

Jesus was speaking to his disciples in a parable that they could really understand. A lot of them were fishermen by trade and all of them were familiar with net fishing. The kind of fishing to which Jesus was referring involved a great drag-net that drew in large hauls of fish. As the parable continues, Jesus tells his disciples that the fishermen in his story collected the good fish in baskets but threw the bad away. He then goes on to say that that is how it will be at the end of the age — the angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous.

Sometimes in our Christian walk it is easy to get caught up in trying to distinguish the good fish from the bad fish — our priority becomes deciding for ourselves who is wicked and who is righteous. But that is not our job! We are the fishermen in the parable! Jesus calls us to fish and fish big! If you've ever known someone with a passion for fishing you know that there is not

much that will keep them from it — frigid or sweltering weather, early morning hours, boredom, faulty equipment — the list goes on. A true fisherman will not be thwarted by less than favorable conditions. Jesus is calling us to be like that in our witness to those around us. We may have difficulties sharing our faith and feel like circumstances have to be just right to have the courage to do so but Jesus calls us to throw out our nets and gather as much fish as we can! He will take care of the rest. Yes, there is evil in this world but God will be the judge and His word for us today is to keep fishing!

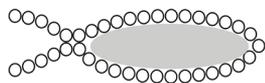
PRAYER: *Thank you Lord for the symbol of the fish not only to remind us of our faith in you but also to remind us what you have called us to do. Please give us courage in our Christian witness. Amen.*

Sandra Gray

DAY 4: Wednesday, November 30

When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?” He said, “Yes, he does.” And when he came home, Jesus spoke of it first, asking, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?” When Peter said, “From others,” Jesus said to him, “Then the children are free. However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for you and me.” MATTHEW 17:24-27

Among all of the various Christian symbols represented in the **Chrismons** so beautifully adorning our sanctuary Christmas tree, the **Ichthys** symbol (the fish) is probably second only to the cross in recognizability, especially among those not schooled in Christian symbology. You may find it a challenge to search the bumpers or rear windows of even one row of cars in your local



supermarket parking lot and not find one or more of these simple fish symbols letting anyone following them know that a person associated with this vehicle has some level of knowledge of Christ. Plumbers, landscapers and home remodelers put this symbol on their business cards in hopes that prospective customers will make some assumptions about their character and therefore their business practices.

One possible explanation for the use of this symbol is that it was used by first century Christians to guide people (pre-GPS) to the places where they would secretly meet for worship. A follower of the Way would simply look for this symbol scratched on the ground leading them to the location of a meeting. We tend to associate it with Jesus inviting some fishermen to follow him and he would make them fishers of men.

The fish stories cited most often are in Luke and John. Luke's story of a large catch (quantity) is tied to the calling of these fishermen/disciples whom Jesus invites to fish for men from now on. John's gospel is a post-resurrection appearance that seems to have parallels to the earlier story even to the point of these fishermen not knowing who the one offering them fishing instructions really is. Here the size of the catch is noted not only in number (153), but also with the adjective "large" describing the size of the individual fish.

The story in Matthew is not always spoken of as a "miraculous catch", but I think that is an apt description. Here we have one fish, the first one Peter catches, not the third, or the seventh; and this fish is caught by the disciple most likely to be named as a fisherman by anyone knowing that Jesus had disciples who had been fishermen. At issue here was the fact that Jesus and the disciples needed some coin of the realm to pay the temple tax. Since the collectors of the tax had asked Peter to get Jesus to pay the tax, Jesus told Peter where he, a fisherman, could get the money to pay the tax: Go fishing.

Now Peter had caught and probably filleted a lot of fish in his day. Most likely he even filleted more than a few of the 153 large ones in John's gospel and I'm thinking that if fish came with coins in their mouths, John or Luke might have mentioned

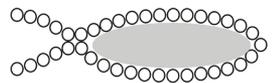
it. Now he was told by Jesus to go and catch one fish and in that fish's mouth he would find a coin sufficient to pay the temple tax. How did the coin get there? Did Peter feel silly throwing a single line in to catch a single fish that he **had** to believe God had not only guided to his line, but had somehow placed a coin in its mouth? Matthew tells us this story and it could be part of his point that if you want to catch a fish you send a fisherman, not a tax collector, like him.

My point in selecting this particular scripture is that we all come to Jesus with different skill sets, from different neighborhoods, with different circles of friends and different perspectives on just about everything. Somebody once said that you may be the only Christian somebody with whom you will come in contact will ever meet. That may or may not be true, but I think it may be true that you, because of your particular geography, acquaintances, unique abilities and singular perspectives may be just the perfect door knob for someone to grab onto to open the door into God's realm.

Do you think Peter ate that fish, or was it catch and release?

PRAYER FOCUS: *How can we, like the disciples, become fishers of men?*

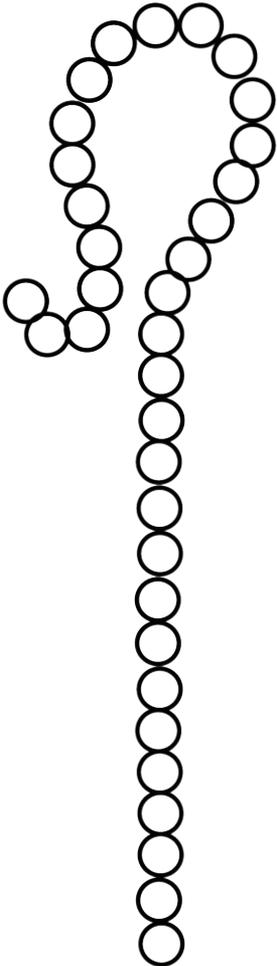
Michael Crane



The Shepherd's Crook

Draw a sheep here

Draw a shepherd here



DAY 5: Thursday, December 1

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

MATTHEW 9:36

This verse is near the end of chapter 9 in Matthew. The chapter is full of miracles Jesus performed. The people are starting to hear more and more about these miracles and the crowds are growing daily. As with any crowd that gathers, I'm sure there are those that see them as a nuisance and others who are scared at what the crowds might do to them or their property. Many of those in the crowds had been abandoned or written off by the Pharisees or maybe they just couldn't seem to follow all the rules required of them by the religious leaders.

These people were lost, looking for something or someone to make their lives better. They were looking for someone who cared about them.

And then there is Jesus.

He has compassion on them. They are like sheep without a shepherd.

The Good Shepherd is mentioned many times in the Bible: "*The Lord is my Shepherd*" (Psalm 23); "*...like sheep without a shepherd, they will all return to their own people*" (Isaiah 13:14); "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*" (John 10:11).

Jesus has love and compassion for his flock. He calmly leads us and teaches us the way to everlasting life. He does not harass, frighten, or bully us to follow him. He quietly leads and if we stumble and lose our way, he gently turns us in the right direction. But we must be willing to watch and look for his direction.

PRAYER: *Dear Father. Please help us in this time of Advent to take time out of our busy schedules and sit quietly to watch and look for Jesus. He will show us the way when we're lost. He will help us to see when we are confused. He will teach us to love if we will listen. Like a shepherd, he will lead us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen*

Lynette Welborn

DAY 6: Friday, December 2

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. JOHN 10:11

Among the patterns of Chrismon ornaments is a shepherd's hook, serving as a reminder that Jesus sometimes called himself a shepherd. At quick glance, this ornament could appear as a candy cane—a very traditional albeit secular Christmas symbol.

Interestingly, research into the origin of the candy cane led to it dating back to 17th century Germany. Legend states that during the Living Crèche ceremony the choirmaster of the Cologne Cathedral would hand out sugar sticks among young fidgety singers to keep them quiet. To appease the board's complaint of candy during a service, he bent the sticks into shepherds' hooks in show of honor to the occasion.

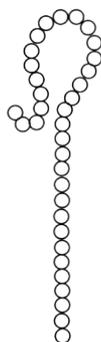
The stripe itself has legendary stories. For hundreds of years, the candy cane was only white; however stories have suggested the stripe was a secret code among persecuted Christians in Germany, a secret language amongst Christian faithful, and the more general symbol of Jesus' blood.

As a result, the beloved candy cane was born.

Jesus is our Good Shepherd, and he did in fact lay down his life for us. To look at the candy cane, we can be easily reminded of this sacrifice, his blood for our sins. To look at the Chrismon hook, we can be easily reminded of his sacrifice, his life for our salvation.

PRAYER: *Dear God, During this Advent season, with each passing of the Chrismon tree and each glance at a candy cane, may we remember to be grateful for the ultimate gift of your Son. Amen*

Tiffany Henshaw



DAY 7: Saturday, December 3

He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep. ISAIAH 40:11

There is something so serene about a pasture. In our area of the world, we typically see horses or cattle grazing in pastures. Sometimes our view is a lovely green field full of round bales of hay, awaiting gathering by a farmer to feed his or her stock when there is no grass to graze on during winter months.

In the pastures of Judah where Isaiah lived, it was more common to see sheep grazing. According to the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, in ancient Israel, "sheep and goats were the principal herd animals: they are mobile, resilient in drought and provide meat, milk, wool, manure, and leather."¹

In Isaiah 40:11, note the gentleness in the way in which God, in the form of His son, Jesus, comforts, feeds, and leads us. He does not carry a cattle prod or a whip; he carries a shepherd's staff. When we stray from the righteous path He wants us to follow, he protects us and lovingly pulls us back from the danger of evil. As we read in Luke 15:5, he joyfully carries us back and places us among his flock after we have strayed.

The passage just before Isaiah 40:11 (verse 10) says "the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm." What a different image than the pastoral scene of a shepherd feeding his flock, holding lambs in his arms, and gently leading mother sheep! Simply glance up at the beautiful stained-glass image of the Moravian Seal in our sanctuary to see a mighty, triumphant sheep surrounded by the words "Our Lamb has conquered; let us follow Him." Our Lord is not only a gentle, loving shepherd, but also a conquering lamb!

He is, indeed, both our shepherd and our sacrificial lamb. What a win/win situation for us if we will only follow him. If we stray, he comforts and protects us. As a result of His sacrifice, we are saved from our sins.

PRAYER: *Thank you, God, for the immense love you show us by guiding and loving us as a shepherd loves his flock.*

Beth Byrd

<https://www.penn.museum/sites/canaan/Animals.html>

DAY 8: Sunday, December 4

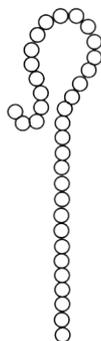
The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. PSALM 23:1

This Psalm was written by King David about 500 years before the birth of Jesus. As a former shepherd boy, David was well acquainted with sheep and shepherding but also with the Lord as his Shepherd. The Lord is personal to David and He provides everything that David needs. He guides David to green pastures and calm waters. He refreshes David's soul and directs him in the way of righteousness. Even if David encounters life-threatening trouble, he does not fear because the "Good Shepherd" walks with him. Comparing himself to a sheep, his predatory enemies can only look at the sheepfold as he is comforted by knowing that the Lord's rod and staff will protect him. He is confident that the Lord will be good to him and will shower him with loving kindness for the rest of his earthly life. He expects to enjoy rich communion with the Lord in the "sanctuary".

As we live our lives, what a blessing to have daily and almost constant interaction with our Lord and Savior. Through prayer and reflection we can experience the same peace and comfort that David received with the assurance of joining our Lord eternally.

PRAYER: *Father, as we listen to Your voice may we respond to your leading. Thank you for the comfort of the words in this psalm; may we dwell in your house now and forever.*

Steve Jones



DAY 9: Monday, December 5

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

JOHN 10:27

It was now winter, during the Feast of Dedication. Three months earlier, Jesus, teaching in the Temple, told the Jews the parable of the sheep and the shepherds. The Jews were skeptical. They had witnessed some of the miracles He had performed, yet still did not believe He was the Messiah. Jesus was simply not the military leader the Jews were expecting.

Now, Jesus was walking through the Temple during the Feast of Dedication, now called Hanukkah. The Jews had gathered around him to point blank ask Him if He was the Christ. They were trying to get Jesus to commit blasphemy. Jesus told them in verse 25 that He had already told them, but they did not believe. In verse 26, Jesus told them they did not believe because they did not belong.

What does it mean to “belong”? To belong means to be a part of something; to be a member of; to be united, as a group; to share common values; to have common goals; and to share common beliefs. As unbelievers, we heard His voice, believed His message of salvation, and became believers. We became His sheep. He became our shepherd. He knows each of us personally. He is our Savior and we follow Him.

As believers, we belong to the family of God. We are not alone. We belong to a family that truly cares for one another. To belong is to believe.

PRAYER: *Dear Lord, as we hear your voice, we seek you and work to do your will. We are thankful that as our shepherd, you know us, guide us, protect us, and love us. Where you lead, we will follow. Amen*

Bill Donald

**Can you re-create the
SHEPHERD'S CROOK chrismon?**



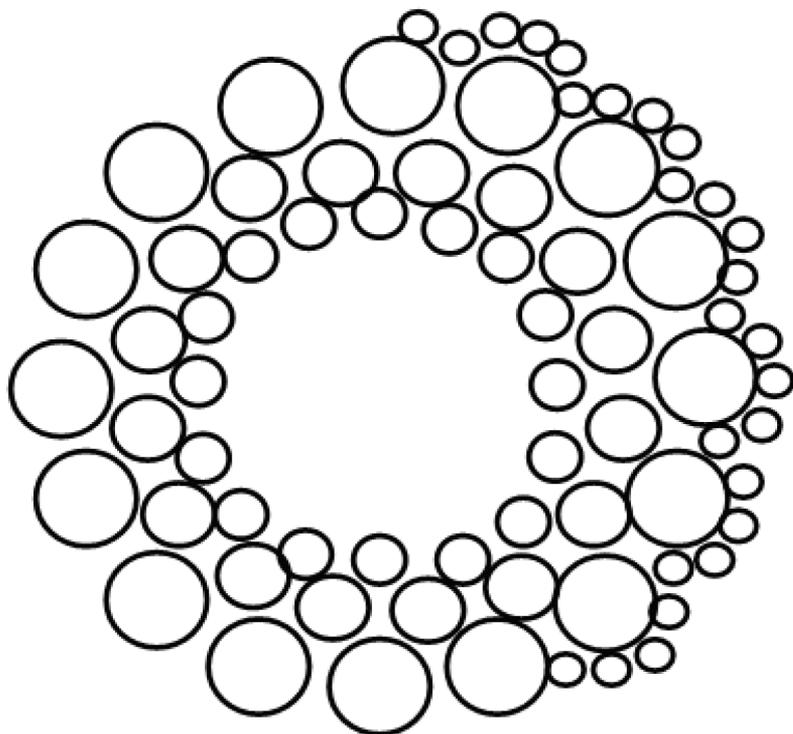
What Christmas song tells us that the shepherds heard the good news the angels shared as they were "in fields where they were keeping their sheep on a cold winters night that was so deep."?

BONUS!

What page number in the Moravian Book of Worship: _____

Eternity

Complete the circles on the
OUTSIDE of the ornament



Color the LARGEST
circles green

DAY 10: Tuesday, December 6

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. ROMANS 6:23

The life God created in each of us is for His pleasure and glory. He has made a way for such life to continue without end, forever giving Him honor and glory as we worship Him in our earthly life and eternity with Him in heaven. This eternal life is a gift for all who believe Jesus is the Son of God, the God who raised Him from the dead. This same Jesus is He whom we confess as our Savior and the Lord of our life by virtue of His birth, death, resurrection, and ascent to the Father.

This life with God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit is like a circle, us in God and God in us having no end. But there are some bumps in this worldly portion of the relationship. Bumps we create. We sin, some small stuff and some bigger; all the same: a broken relationship.

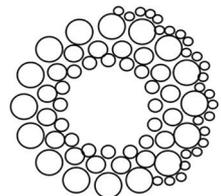
But, God gave us a way to fix the break. He knew we would need one. In the book of 1 John, chapter 1, verse 9 tells us: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and clean us from all unrighteous.* The relationship is restored; the circle is unbroken. Joy continues.

Unbelief, the eternal sin, is death, evermore. No God, no life, no circle of Joy.

The choice belongs to each of us.

PRAYER: *Thank you, Heavenly Father, for giving us a way to mend our broken relationship and stay in communion with You. Through repentance, you wash away our sins; through faith, you give us eternal life. Hallelujah! Amen*

Lacy Bellomy



DAY 11: Wednesday, December 7

...but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. JOHN 4:14

About four years ago, I had the pleasure of attending a Sunday School class taught by former President Jimmy Carter. While it pains me to admit that I don't remember the epistle scripture references, the message wasn't lost on me: Jesus came not to build up walls, but to tear them down.

In this passage, Jesus does just that, yet again. Enroute from Judea to Galilee, Jesus had to pass through the land in between, Samaria. A Jew other than Jesus might have taken a different, albeit longer, route that would avoid this region given the centuries-old feud between Jews and Samaritans. But not Jesus: He went right through the area where anything might happen.

Tired from travel, in the heat of the day he approached a well and asked a woman there for water. Not just any woman, but a Samaritan woman. Here was another convention ignored: No rabbi would ever speak to a woman in public, especially one of such dubious character. But Jesus ignored custom and propriety.

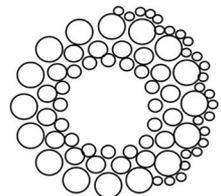
There's plenty of commentary written about what happens next. There's the fact that the well at the center of this story holds water, water that "percolates;" it is not running water such as might come from a spring, which would always be preferable. There's plenty to dissect within their conversation, too, especially the woman's misunderstanding the "living water" Jesus offers. She finally is flippant when she tells him to give her the water.

Ultimately, this story is about how well Jesus understands the human condition. He understands our wandering hearts; He understands our secular thirst; He understands the guilt and weight of our sin; He understands our search for meaning and

purpose. And He's offering the answer, the only answer to fill the voids and calm the anxiety. He offers Himself, and invites relationship with Him – that is, the living water. Jesus comes to us in the desert of our lives and says, "Come...and drink from the fountain." And the water that we find there will spring up in us joy that can't be found anywhere else.

PRAYER: *Jesus, open our ears to hear your call, open our minds to understand your promise, and open our spirits to discern how to drink of the living water. Amen*

Anonymous



DAY 12: Thursday, December 8

And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. HEBREWS 5:9

The Perfect Gift

When we give a gift to someone we want that gift to be appropriate and something the recipient needs. We certainly would not want to give a gift that is less than perfect. God gives us the gift of His son whom He has created and tested to perfection in the wilderness.

One of the Chrismon symbols is the circle. While we can make pretty good circles, we cannot describe a circle perfectly. Only God can describe a circle perfectly because the ratio of the circumference to diameter π has decimal digits that continue on to infinity. The circle has become one of man's most useful concepts (wheels and orbits, for example).

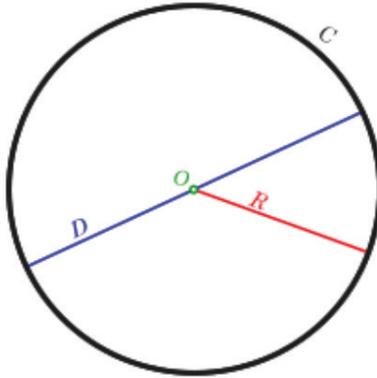
We must learn to use God's gifts correctly. We must draw circles of inclusion, not exclusion. We must use our Savior to draw people in, not to divide or exclude.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, expand our views of you and your commands. As you open our hearts and minds, may we find opportunities for bringing people into your Kingdom. Amen*

David Turck

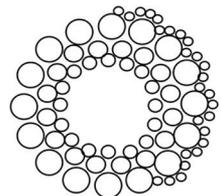
DAY 13: Friday, December 9

Because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen, for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. 2 CORINTHIANS 4:18 (NRSVUE)



The image above is pleasantly, or perhaps unpleasantly, familiar to many of us: the circle as a geometric figure with center O , diameter D , radius R and circumference C . Wrestling with the unit circle to learn about trigonometry may not have been a time of great joy in school, but when we explore characteristics of this figure that are hidden from our first glance, we can learn much about the patterns in God's Creation, which includes Eternity.

As one example from the circle, the relationship of the circumference to the diameter stated as $C/D = 3.1415926535897933\dots$, a non-repeating decimal that goes on forever and a constant that holds for any and all circles no matter their size. This constant is referred to as π , the Greek letter transliterated as pi and pronounced "pie." When absolute precision isn't required, we take $\pi = 3.14$, so for a certain kind of nerd, March 14th becomes Pi Day, and we may or may not indulge in our favorite sweet or savory pie. But the value π appears in many of the mathematical relationships that we use to describe our world: in physics, engineering or statistics, wherever we are contemplating God's



Creation, the mathematical notation π is a necessary part of that portrait.

More obviously, a circle has no corners, no beginning and no end. For eons, that unending nature of the circle has fascinated humankind. Many cultures have used the shape to describe time with their basic concept being the seasons infinitely repeating without fundamental change. From Judaism, we have added time in a different sense: a line with a beginning, Creation, and an end to this time, the Second Coming, with our concept of Eternity. For us, each year is like the last and like the next, there is a consistency in the way God has organized our seasons, so the circle is still there as part of our notion of time. When we add the recognition of how important the circle is in describing Creation, we have an even deeper understanding of its significance as a symbol of our relationship to God's presence in our world from beginning on into Eternity.

PRAYER: May we remember that this circle, whether physically present in the lovely gold and beaded ones on our Chrismon tree or a wedding ring or a wrist bangle from a friend, is a symbol of God's Creation and of eternity. It has no end and no corners and brings the gift of helping us to describe and to understand His Creation.

Mary Ruth McRae

DAY 14: Saturday, December 10

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. 1 JOHN 2:17

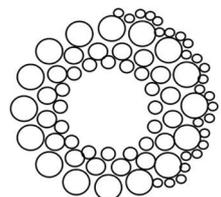
One hot September afternoon as I was waiting in the car line to pick up our grandson after school, I met Rachel. Rachel works at Lloyd Presbyterian Church on North Chestnut Street, which is at the corner of the entrance to the school.

That day the church received two large boxes of spaghetti and butternut squash from a local farmer. Rachel was tasked with finding homes for these squash. I watched from a distance in my car as she and Dan, a young man helping her with the heavy boxes of squash, discussed what to do with this bounty.

Rachel seemed perplexed, but not for long. After Dan loaded the boxes of squash in her car, she began to drive out of the school driveway with her blinkers on, stopping at each car in the long line of cars offering squash to each occupant. Not only did she offer squash, but she also offered suggestions on how to prepare them. What a surprising encounter on a hot September afternoon. These squash were not going to be wasted! I have no idea how many people took squash home that day; but I do know many, including me, took home the warmth and kindness shared by God's servant Rachel.

This personal encounter with Rachel was a gift of a moment in time where all the angst in the world was forgotten. The world was passing away as the will of God was taking place. I will forever remember this experience as Rachel reached out to people she did not know, offering a glimpse into the life of a simple servant performing a simple task with great love, joy and kindness. That was the example Christ taught.

May God keep us centered and devoted to him, following the life path he has cleared, watching the signposts, walking at the pace and rhythms he laid down for our ancestors. 1 KINGS 8:58 (THE MESSAGE)



Rachel certainly walked at the pace and rhythm of Christ that day. Those waiting in the car line were anxious to get on with the day and picking up precious ones was important; but watching Rachel so lovingly invite others into her "will of God" moment will be a treasured memory in many hearts.

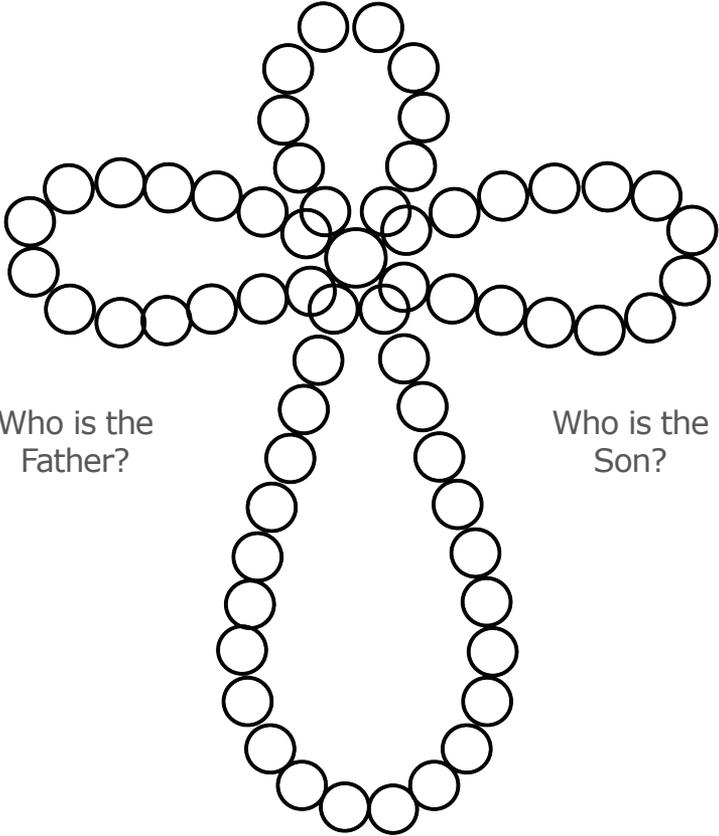
If Christ is at the heart of all we do, all we have, all we treasure then we are living within the will of God and the world will pass away with all its desires, because all we will truly desire is to be God's people living, loving and serving others, even in a car line.

PRAYER: *Thank you Father for Rachel and for all the Rachels in our lives. May we become a Rachel for others sharing the circle of eternal love with all your family, as we seek your pace and rhythm. In Christ's holy and precious name. Amen.*

Janet Williams

Unity of the Father & Son

What does unity mean?



Who is the
Father?

Who is the
Son?

DAY 15: Sunday, December 11

Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

JOHN 17:24

This verse is part of Christ's prayer for His disciples and all believers. It conveys to believers that Jesus Christ the Son is united with God the Father. This unity was accomplished because God became human in baby Jesus, and His purpose was to redeem us from our sinful nature, because He would be sacrificed on the cross. As we are born again by accepting Him as our Savior, we are guided along His Way and eventually as believers, we will realize true glory.

In plain language, He prays that all believers will unite as one body, the church, because we now belong to Him. We will see Jesus Christ's glory and these believers who are now redeemed will be safe with the Father and Son and attain glory when we ascend to heaven where the Father and Son dwell.

Now all this was preordained even before the creation of the world. That means upon death we should rejoice in knowing that the departed will be with the Father and Son (Jesus Christ) in a glorious dwelling place.

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, we praise you and worship you for your presence among us. We thank you for walking as one of us to show us the Way to that glorious dwelling place. Such a price you paid on the cross for us; such love that's priceless. We will always have immense gratitude and worship you. Help us to stay on the straight and narrow path, and show Your love to all. Praise be to You, Amen.*

Carol Crooks

DAY 16: Monday, December 12

The Father and I are one: NRSV

I and My Father are one: KJV

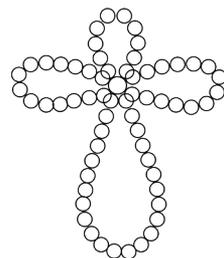
I and the Father are one: JOHN 10:30 NIV & RSV & AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION

What exactly does this verse mean? This concept has always been a bit puzzling for me. I turned to various versions of the Bible to read and we can see slight wording variations above. When I pray to God, am I also praying to Jesus Christ? God and Jesus Christ are one in the same – an idea that I have been taught since Sunday School as a child at Yadkinville First Baptist Church. It is still sometimes hard for me to fathom and grasp in my logical, linear-sequential mind. This concept is too big to ponder in one sitting; it can take time for me to digest. And it requires faith to accept/embrace.

For context of this verse, religious leaders were surrounding Jesus at the temple during this time and asking if He indeed was the Messiah. The beautiful verse that we claim as Moravians is just preceding in John 10:27: "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me." Then in verse 30, Jesus openly states that he is divine. He is God! Jesus and God are not the same person, but they are one in essence. Jesus is not just a good teacher, but God indeed. A bold, clear, unmistakable claim.

The Chrismon for this Unity of Father and Son category is a cross made of a horizontal loop and a vertical one, reminding me of:

- Infinity
- No beginning, no end
- One
- True connections of God and Jesus Christ
- No breaks
- Continuum



- Visible intersection at the center of God and Christ
- Ongoing
- Forever
- Always.

PRAYER: *Dear Father, thank you for the mysteries of Scripture and the associated challenges leading us to think and ponder our ever-growing faith. Help us to read the Bible during this Advent season, and see the birth of Jesus anew as Father and Son being one. Thank you for your great love and mercy. Amen.*

Mona Brown Ketner

DAY 17: Tuesday, December 13

Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. JOHN 14:9-11

C’mon, Philip...really?...

According to John’s Gospel, Philip was one of the first disciples called. Later that day or the next:

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him about whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.’ Nathanael [snarkily] said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ JOHN 1:45,46 NRSV (WITH MY OWN IMPLIED PARENTHETICAL PARAPHRASE)

Later in John’s Gospel it is Philip whom some Greeks (or some Greek-speaking gentiles) seek out to try to meet Jesus:

They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." JOHN 12:21

So, why, two chapters later, does Philip ask Jesus:
Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.

Surely, anyone who knows the Hebrew Scriptures (or has seen "Raiders of the Lost Ark") knows that's not going to end well:

The Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have asked, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord,' and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one shall see me and live." EXODUS 33: 17-20

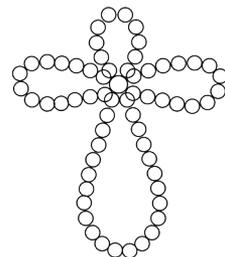
Several New Testament passages tell us that Jesus revealed the image of God. "The Greek word for image is eikōn (εἰκόν) [from which we get the word icon], which means "representation."

When Jesus was asked if it is proper to pay taxes to Caesar, he asked to look at the coin. Jesus asked, "Whose image is this?" (Matthew 22:20 or Luke 20:24). The image (eikōn) is an exact representation of the die from which it was cast.

In the New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words, Lawrence O. Richards wrote: "Although the [New Testament] never speaks of Jesus as being in the image of man, we should not conclude that he simply *seemed* to be human; for he is *never* said to be in the likeness of God, but he is **fully** God. ... Jesus in his person perfectly represented God as he truly is. Jesus could not perfectly represent man as he is, however, for humanity is tainted by sin. Jesus' human nature was untainted by sin."

As we pray in the **Liturgy of Adoration**: "In you, the full content of the divine nature dwells in a human body. You are the true God and eternal life."

Jesus said, *...I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*



If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him. JOHN 14:6,7

Furthermore, as we come into relationship with Christ as the way, truth, and life, Paul says that we are transformed into Christ's image:

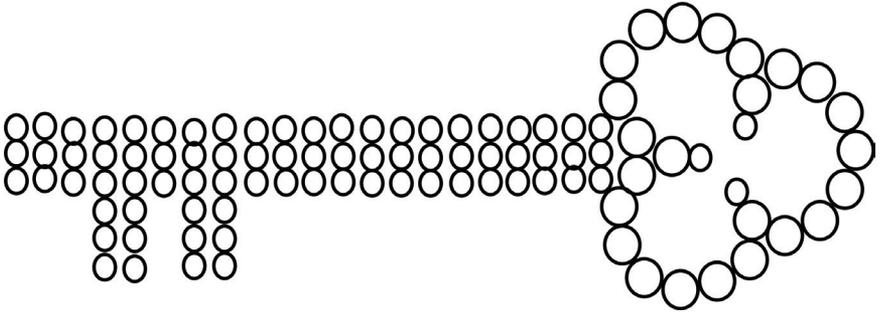
Those called according to God's purpose will become conformed to the image (eikōn) of His Son. ROMANS 8:28,29

[We] have put on the new [person], which is being renewed in knowledge after the image (eikōn) of its creator. COLOSSIANS 3:10

PRAYER: *Mighty God, we humbly pray, let your pow'r now lead the way that in all things we may show that we in your likeness grow. (MBW 586, Veni Redemptor Gentium of Ambrose of Milan (c. 374). Translated by Johann Christian Jacobi (1720).*

David Blum

Key of Peter



How many items can you name that need a key to unlock?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

DAY 18: Wednesday, December 14

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. MATTHEW 16:18-19

In the beginning of chapter 16, Jesus is confronted by a group of Pharisees and Sadducees who demand a miracle from him, in spite of having seen many of Jesus's past remarkable acts. As Jesus leaves the unsatisfied group, he warns his disciples about the teachings of these religious leaders. As they travel, Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" Peter's reply is immediate: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Verse 18 of today's text provides Jesus's response to Peter and to his confession of faith: "*And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...*"

Based on these words, the Catholic Church claims Peter as the first pope. Protestants see the passage differently, believing that it is Peter's personal confession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God that is the church's foundation. Biblical and Greek scholars can provide evidence to support either view. Regardless of how we understand Peter, his work in helping to establish the early church and his powerful preaching are undeniable; his first sermon brought 3,000 people to faith! (read Acts 2)

But we are still left wondering about the "keys of the Kingdom of heaven." What are they and do they represent special authority given only to Peter?

I like what Pastor John Piper has to say about "keys" based on Matthew 18:18. He describes the keys of the kingdom as the teachings of Jesus, and "*when any faithful Christian who speaks the words with the bedrock of Jesus's identity at the center – when you speak those words faithfully, you are using the keys of the kingdom to open the kingdom in people's lives.*"

The “keys,” of the kingdom, then, symbolically show us how to achieve salvation. The keys come from ministers of the faith, from our study of the Word, from our fellowship with others on the path, and with the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Chrismon of a large key reminds us that Peter’s faith and love for Jesus unlocked the door to discipleship and bringing others into the Kingdom.

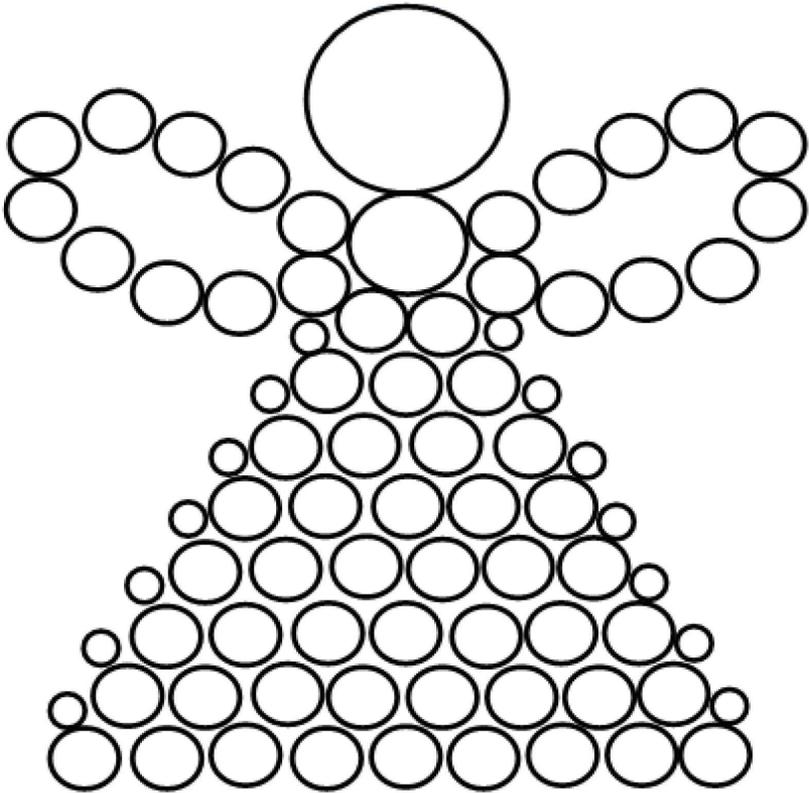
PRAYER: *Precious Jesus, we thank you for the work and faith of the saints who inspire us, from the leaders of the New Testament Church like Peter; to those in our lives who have guided us into the faith, and shown us the “keys of the kingdom.” Like Peter, we proclaim that you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Amen.*

Clyde Manning



Angels

Draw a halo over
the angel's head



Color the wings blue

DAY 19: Thursday, December 15

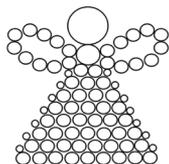
Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? HEBREWS 1:14

Last December at a DIY (do-it-yourself) Christmas pageant that was part of a Thursday Gathering, the part of the angel Gabriel was played by two of us. I assisted an angel who could not yet read but who certainly knew something about angels.

Eliza and I got to make pronouncements and announcements to important people (Mary and the shepherds), and we both took our jobs quite seriously. I whispered the words to Eliza so that she could say them aloud and tried to keep our halos and wings from falling to the side as we reenacted the most special Advent story. Like angels anywhere, we were serving others by bringing important messages. First we told both Mary and the shepherds not to be afraid. The messages we were about to share would change their lives in important ways.

"Is it my turn to shine?" Eliza asked in a stage whisper several times before it was our turn to share the special messages that Gabriel shared with Mary and that the angel shared with the shepherds in the field outside Bethlehem. In Luke 2, this angel is identified as "the angel of the Lord" or as Eugene Peterson's *The Message* says: "Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, 'Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.'"

Eliza and I spoke these words to the shepherd (played by Clyde who stood with one of the cutout sheep that we had used to "flock" lawns of members earlier in the year on her shoulder—like the image Abby shared in her sermon of the sheep draped around the shoulder of the shepherd). After our pronouncement, the



shepherd seemed to hear the message clearly. She was not afraid.

As the angel Gabriel, both Eliza and I spoke to Mary (played by Eliza's mother) and said: "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." (Mary was perplexed by these words. Who was this messenger and what did this mean?)

But we (Eliza and I as Gabriel) told her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." And Gabriel continued telling Mary that the child to be born to her would be called the son of God, that her relative Elizabeth would also have a son, for nothing is impossible with God.

And Mary listened to the angel Gabriel, losing her fear and hearing that nothing is impossible with God. (FROM LUKE 1:26-38)

The hopeful and exuberant messages brought by angels will shine on the Christmas tree this Advent: Do not be afraid. Nothing is impossible with God. "*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!*" (LUKE 2:14)

Angels are God's messengers even if we see them with halos and wings that shift from side to side and even when they whisper instead of shouting.

If you want to see some of the Christmas pageant from last December's Gathering, check out past videos on the New Philadelphia Moravian Church Facebook page. You'll see a humble cast who gathered on a Thursday evening together, donned some rudimentary costumes, told stories that included a donkey (Micah), sheep and shepherds (No, Teddy wasn't a sheep this time), of wise men and new parents and a baby, our Immanuel, our "God with us." Oh yes, and the angels, especially the one whose turn it was to shine. Amen.

Kay Windsor

DAY 20: Friday, December 16

He will send his Angels!

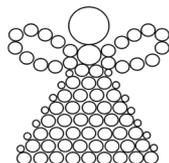
And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. MATTHEW 24:31

The verse from Matthew underscores the important role of angels in the Bible. It is believed the four winds referred to are actually points of the known world at the time. The Tigris runs to Assyria, the Euphrates to Armenia, the Pishon to Havilah or Elam, and the Gihon to Ethiopia.

It is unlikely most people have experienced Biblical angels, but we do recognize and appreciate those people who have led exemplary lives and have influenced us in a positive way. These angels may be parents, teachers, and even the little children in our lives. As we continue to celebrate the Advent season reflect on those angels in your lives no matter in what corner of the earth they live.

PRAYER FOCUS: *Who has been an angel(s) in your life?*

David Stanfield



DAY 21: Saturday, December 17

For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully;' LUKE 4:10

Through most of my adult life I've heard people say turn to scripture for guidance. It sounded so easy and in many cases it was; however, I've also heard that to better understand a Bible verse, it's important to read the verses before it and after it. This is especially true for this verse.

When I first read this verse, it brought a sense of comfort to me, knowing that God had sent angels to carefully guard me throughout the day. Then I read the verses before and after Luke 4:10 and I realized that in fact, Satan said this verse as part of his temptation of Jesus after His 40 days in the Wilderness. What seemed simple had just become much more complex.

Jesus had not eaten anything during his 40 days in the Wilderness, which left him fatigued and hungry. As has happened through my life, Satan tempted Him while He was in a very vulnerable state. Satan tempted Jesus to be his own murderer by using verses found in Psalm 91. In his response to this temptation, Christ doesn't suggest that God would abandon Him—only that it would be wrong to challenge God, as if daring Him to break His promises. I think the angels promised by God to keep me safe are intended to protect me from the temptations of Satan, not to protect me if I give into the temptations of Satan.

The Advent season is a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming and to the anniversary of Our Lord's birth on Christmas. Chrismons are Christmas decorations that use Christian symbols. They help Christians to remember that Christmas is the celebration of Jesus's birthday. They are often used on Christmas Trees in Churches and Christian homes. The Chrismon "Angel" reminds us (as mentioned in Psalm 91:11) that "...he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."

While absolute safety is not guaranteed in this life, those who honor God by obeying His wisdom are not subject to unnecessary dangers and will be provided the strength to deal with the temptations found in our day-to-day life....

PRAYER FOCUS: *God gives us the strength to resist temptation*

Smitty Welborn

DAY 22: Sunday, December 18

But someone has testified somewhere, What are humans that you are mindful of them or mortals that you care for them? You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, subjecting all things under their feet.” HEBREWS 2:6-7

The author of Hebrews, likely either Paul or someone trained by Paul, is citing Psalm 8, a Psalm of David:

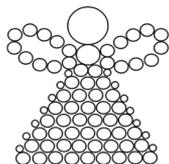
When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet..

David seems to be gazing up at the stars and the untold vastness of God’s creative mastery, and asking: “What are we humans, that YOU are mindful of us, that you even give us authority to care for all that you have made?”

David seems to be pondering the notion that the God of Creation values us, and not only values, but gives authority to us, imperfect and sinful though we be. We are lower than the angels, flawed and yet that is who He chose to live among, to love, to teach and ultimately, to sacrifice Himself for.



And who tells us of this amazing gift? We hear the word of His coming, the word of His birth — and eventually, the word of His victory over death — from the angels.

As you enter the sanctuary this season, or as you look at Christmas decorations all around you, take notice of the angels that you see. How are the messengers portrayed? And when you think of angels, or wonder about them, do you imagine:

~ serene, beautiful beings, peacefully swishing through the air in the heavenly realm

or

~ fierce guardians, spiritual warriors, battling evil in the heavenly realm

or

~ couriers, gently beckoning the souls of those departing this earthly life to accompany them onward?

Angels may be any, and may be all of those things, and in each case they are messengers, delivering news of who our God is and what He is about.

The message we hear from Hebrews is that God made us for a little while lower than the angels and crowned us with glory and honor, subjecting all things under our feet. And then He chose to come live among us, and to give us the gift of life with Him through His sacrifice in our place.

It truly was and is GOOD NEWS delivered to us in the Christmas Story, and who better to deliver that news than the messengers of God Himself.

Pay special attention as you look around this season. Look for “the angels”!

PRAYER: *Creator God, You made us a little lower than the angels, and allowed us the privilege of caring for the works of your hands. As we move ever closer to our Savior’s coming, help us to love, honor and protect all that you have entrusted to our care. May we be found faithful, that we, too, may be called messengers of our Creator God. Amen.*

Evie Blum

DAY 23: Monday, December 19

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

HEBREWS 13:2

I can truthfully say I have never studied this verse until it was assigned to me as a devotional passage. At first, I read the verse in several translations and every version seemed to emphasize hospitality as opening my home to “strangers”, providing meals and lodging for them, all in hopes of entertaining angels, also interpreted as messengers from God. That whole concept made me very uncomfortable.

Then I began to research a bit of the history behind the passage and found that during the time this was written, there were few public places for people to stay overnight. Many of the lodges were unsafe so travelers depended on “strangers,” especially fellow believers for food and lodging along the way.

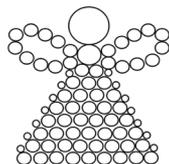
The second part of the verse introduces the idea that people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Several commentaries suggested that this part of the verse is connected to Genesis 18:1-16, a story of Abraham entertaining Yahweh and two angels. The author of one commentary inferred that the goal of this instruction was not to entertain angels, but to be like Abraham and follow the premier model of hospitality.

I believe the anonymous author of this passage in Hebrews was primarily instructing me to show hospitality to others. To me, being hospitable is respecting differences in others, showing kindness to others and welcoming others.

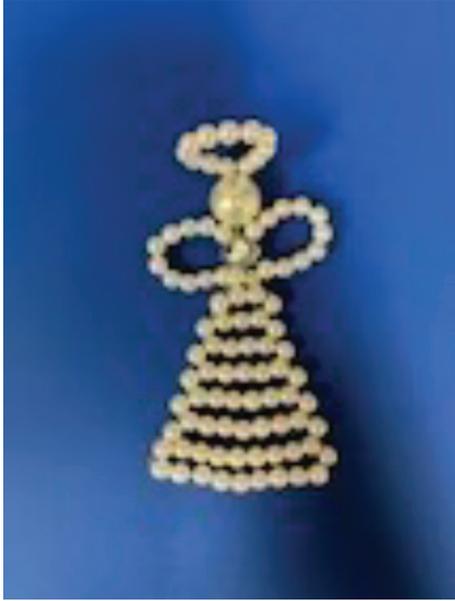
For example, I can invite a “stranger” for a cup of coffee and in return, I may be blessed with a message from God.

PRAYER: *Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for the loving instruction of this passage on how I should approach “strangers”. Provide me with ways and opportunities to show hospitality to believers I do not know and encourage me to take advantage of those occasions. Amen.*

Anonymous



**Can you re-create the
ANGEL chrismon?**



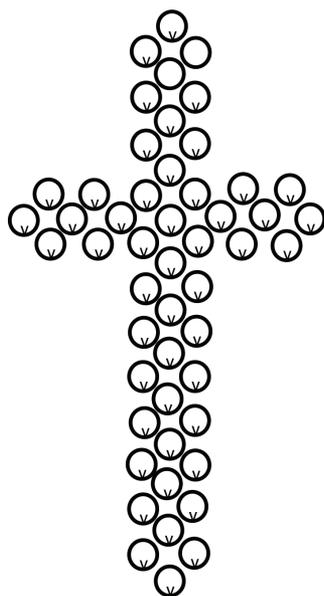
What Christmas song tells us what the angels said when Baby Jesus was born? (Gloria in excelsis Deo!)

BONUS!

What page number in the Moravian Book of Worship: _____

Cross

Practice drawing crosses



DAY 24: Tuesday, December 20

Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. MATTHEW 10:38

What does the cross represent?

In Jesus' days it was a symbol of death. Criminals were required to carry their cross on their backs to the place of death. Today, however, one of the symbols of the cross is Christ's sacrifice for us. Since he sacrificed his life for us, we, in turn, should sacrifice our lives for him.

How do we do this?

We take our personal ambitions, our comforts, our careers, etc., and hand them over to Christ... we do life His way. Trusting him in EVERY area of our lives. It's not an easy choice: We like our independence! Do you think it was easy for Jesus to make such a sacrifice??

"In Christianity there is always a cross, for it is the religion of THE cross." William Barclay

PRAYER: *Jesus help us to take up our cross and follow you, lay down our lives trusting you in all our ways. Amen*

Darla Bonnett

DAY 25: Wednesday, December 21

He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 1 PETER 2:24

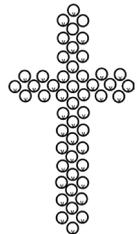
As we believers ponder this verse, we must understand and attempt to recognize the gravity of the sacrifice our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, made with his suffering and death on the cross. These sins he bore were not his own, nor the sins of angels, but of men or the human race. He personally carried our sins in His body on the cross, willingly offering Himself on it, as on an altar of sacrifice, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. By His wounds, those who believe have been healed. In other words, His bruising was your healing. He saved us from sin.

We as Christians have been healed from the penalty and power of our sins by his wounds, by His death in our place, and by His suffering for our good. This is our "spiritual destiny". This is our "gift from God" for our eternal life.

Lastly, it is through the Resurrection that we find the faith by which we will ultimately be in an eternal relationship with God.

PRAYER FOCUS: *By His wounds we have been healed!*

Sandy Jones



DAY 26: Thursday, December 22

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

Wait, what? The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing? That doesn't sound right, because the ones whose souls are in peril are the ones who need to be saved and experience the power of God, right?

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth he was referring to the mind set of that time when a Roman-dominated society worshiped many gods. Jesus, the one Christians called the Son of God, was seen by them to have been defeated, put to death in the most horrific and humiliating method of the day, crucifixion. To the non-believers, that was a sign of a weak, powerless god, and to follow such a god would be foolish. As Christians, we understand why Jesus chose to, and had to die. It is through his suffering, death, and resurrection that we have been saved by the power of God.

Much like during the time when Paul wrote this letter, we are living in a country where stories of violence, crime, and social turmoil appear to us every day. We live in a world where disease, poverty, and war wreak havoc on the people and the lands. Sometimes it seems like there is no end to it, no place to hide from it, no way to escape it.

Does hearing the news or interacting with social media ever make you feel weak, powerless, overwhelmed, or scared? When we allow the craziness around us to take over our thoughts, then we are fulfilling the first part of this scripture verse. We are allowing the message of the cross to seem foolish to non-believers and we are allowing the world to take power over us. What's the point of reading our Bibles, attending church, praising God, and praying if we let the events of the day fill us with fear?

When times are tough, we need to submit ourselves and our lives to God and let His power lift us, strengthen us, and protect

us. If we truly believe and have faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, then the cross is not foolish; it is a symbol of the everlasting love of an omnipotent God.

Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus - as a baby's birth to be celebrated, and a second coming to call believers home to eternal life with our heavenly Father. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let's focus on why He came and what that meant to the early Christians way back then as well as what it still means for us today. My favorite Advent hymn is "O Come, O Come, Immanuel" but I think a different hymn from the MBOW would be a more appropriate prayer for today.

PRAYER: *Rejoice, rejoice, the kingdom comes; be glad for it is near. It comes with joy surprising us; it triumphs o'er our fears. Give thanks, for as the kingdom comes it brings God's own shalom, a state of peace and justice where all with God are one. Rejoice, rejoice, God's will stands firm throughout all time and space. It is a quiet, steady force pervading ev'ry place. It snaps through the brittleness of hate, unties the bonds of greed. It holds out love abundant which never fails our need. Amen.*

Nancy Leonard

DAY 27: Friday, December 23

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up. JOHN 3:14

To get a good understanding of this text, one must refer to the book of Numbers, chapter 21, and verses 4-9. Verse 9: "Then the Lord said to Moses, make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole: and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live. So Moses made a bronze serpent and put it on a pole and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived." The serpent or snake is the embodiment of a curse, so God redeemed us from the curse, if we believe in Him.

Moses lifted up the serpent, so that any man who believes in Him may have eternal life. For God loved the world so much that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in Him shall not be lost, but should have eternal life. One must understand that God did not send his son into the world to pass sentence upon it, but to save it, through Him. Therefore, anyone who believes in Jesus Christ can be lifted up into heaven and experience eternal life.

No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from the presence of God, the Son of Man. In the same way that Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so people could have something to see and then believe. It is then necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up, so that everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain eternal life.

It can be said that the sole purpose for mounting the serpent on a pole was to render it conspicuous, to enable everyone to see and believe in the Son of Man. To look up at the serpent and be healed from being bitten by a snake is a good example of building our faith in Jesus Christ.

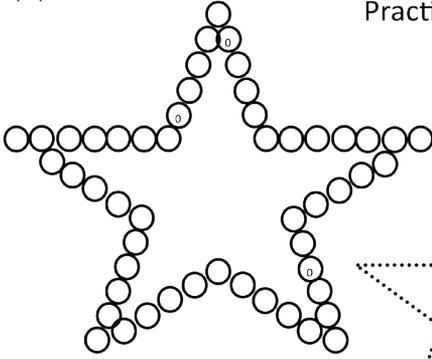
It is then most fitting that during this Advent season we hold the cross high, in the same manner in which Moses lifted up the serpent, such that believers and non-believers may seek Jesus Christ as their teacher, preacher and healer to gain eternal life.

PRAYER: Gracious God our Heavenly Father, during this Advent season leading to the birth of your son, guide us so we may look to the cross where your son was crucified to save humanity from our sins. Please help us to strengthen our faith and hope as believers that one day we too may be lifted up as we seek eternal life.

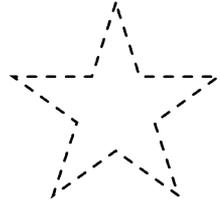
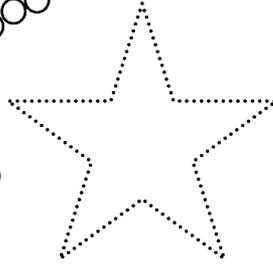
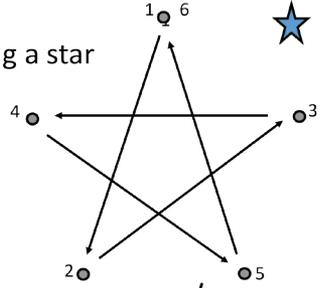
Evon Crooks

Epiphany Star

Practice drawing a star



Practice drawing a star



DAY 28: Saturday, December 24

An Invitation to be Still

“Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.” ISAIAH 40:26

When was the last time you witnessed the marvel that is a blanket of stars lying across the night sky, without a single interruption of cloud? When was the last time you were dazzled by God? When was the last time you chose to break your tracks, pause what you were doing, and allow yourself to be still?

Every year, back when I was a Senior High youth, we would take this wonderful trip to the beach called the Rest Retreat. Strategically scheduled right before exams, our teenage minds were invited to simply be still. And what a gift that was.

Upon arrival to the Trinity Center, we would be given a devotion to think and pray on, then we would all enter into a time of pure silence. No one was to utter a word until after breakfast the next morning. As bizarre as that might sound to a world that values noise and movement, rarely have I ever experienced such peace as I did on those special weekends of rest. Never have I heard God’s voice ring so clearly as when I was listening to the silence. No expectation, no responsibilities, no weight sat upon us, rather we were simply invited to be with each other and witness God as he moved throughout creation. We were invited to a deeper understanding of what it meant to be called beloved children of the Creator himself.

As we approach the end of this bustling Advent season, remember why we gather around a great big table. Remember why we fill our rooms with our dearest family and friends. Remember why we are blessed with so much. And remember those who have a deeper understanding of this marvelously jolly season than any of us, and yet remain without a warm home to enjoy a meal in.

PRAYER: ***Our Dear Heavenly Father, we love the sparkles, the shine, the scents, the melodies, the everything of this glorious***

Christmas season. How can one not get caught up in every measure of merriment? Yet with all the scents, the tastes, and the noises of this season, may we be on guard against blinding our eyes and deafening our ears to the newborn heartbeat of this season, little baby Jesus.

Abby Dwiggin

**Can you re-create the
STAR Chrismon?**



What Christmas song compares Jesus to a star that is brighter than the sun?

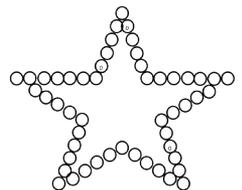
BONUS!

What page number in the Moravian Book of Worship: _____

BONUS Challenge! Add up the page numbers and share the correct answer with Pastor Sam for a special prize.

+ _____

Sshhh, don't share the secret answer!



DAY 29: Sunday, December 25

The wise men from the east asked: "Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We have seen his star in far-off eastern lands, and have come to worship him." MATTHEW 2:2

The birth of a baby always brings excitement and expectation, but this baby (Jesus)...the newborn King of the Jews...this particular baby's birth stirred up and generated all kinds of excitement. Jesus had not yet even said a word, or shared a parable, or walked on water, or healed the sick or raised the dead...all he did was to be born...just a little, bitty baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Although Jesus was just a baby, the wise men, these learned astronomers from afar, traveled thousands of miles over what had to have been dusty, dirty, dangerous terrain in order to find and worship the baby, this newborn King. These wise men believed, had faith and focused on the star so they could find this newborn King. They followed the heavenly star that provided the light that allowed them to find Jesus who is **THE LIGHT!** If you close your eyes, use your imagination and listen very closely, you can hear the wise men prayerfully singing during their long, treacherous journey, "...Star of wonder, Star of night, Star with royal beauty bright, Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to Thy perfect light." Their prayer was answered! They were guided to Jesus, the perfect light!

Even though it's been thousands of years since the wise men followed the star that provided the light that led them to find the newborn King, we can also follow the light because "Jesus is the light of the world." Just like the wise men, if we believe, have faith and focus on the light, we will find Him! The God of creation gave the wise men a light to follow so they could reach their destination. We, too, have been given a light and each of us can also reach our destination if we just follow **THE LIGHT!**

The Advent season is coming to a close, but for sure, the story does not stop here. The closing of the season is not the end, just another beginning, another opportunity for us to celebrate

and worship the "...King of Kings and Lord of Lords..." The wise men had traveled from afar to find this baby. They would certainly not have stopped their worshiping at the manger. Surely, as they returned to their homeland, the wise men would have continued to praise and worship the Christ child. They would have wanted to share their blessed experience with all those with whom they crossed paths during their travels home. They would have wanted to exclaim that "...God with man is now residing, Yonder shines the infant Light; Come and worship, Come and worship, Worship Christ, the newborn King!"

PRAYER: *Dear Lord, you are our brightest star and our shining hope in the darkest night. "Oh what praises shall we render for this never ceasing Light!" Help us to follow The Light and to have the courage to be a constant light in your world. Amen.*

Marie Rodden



Chrismons

DEDICATIONS

Dedicated by

Sandra & Frank Chitty
Sandra & Frank Chitty
Sandra & Frank Chitty
Elaine & Bill Donald
Elaine & Bill Donald
Maurene & Dan Franklin
Dan Franklin
Maurene & Dan Franklin
Maurene & Dan Franklin
Maurene & Dan Franklin
Johnnie Hauser
Johnnie Hauser
Nancy & Melvin Holland
Sarah & Steve Huddleston
Sarah & Steve Huddleston

LouAnn & Lance Jackson
Iona Lewis
Clyde Manning
Clyde Manning
Mary Ruth & Larry McRae
Nancy Renn
Rebecca Rogers

In Honor of

Benjamin & Anna Chitty
Johnnie Hauser
Michael Westmoreland
Jennifer & Shawn Trahey
Molly & Jeff Donald
Sam & Lorena Gray
Mary Maurene Franklin
Tamara Ann LaMontagne
Brittany Marie Pendergrass
Clyde Manning
Jane & Jack Shore
Clyde Manning
Valerie & Michael Crane
Stephanie & Bryan London
*Brittany, Scott, &
Jack Huddleston*
Our grand daughters
Clyde Manning
Tammie Manning
Trudy Farnell
Aemon & Ezra McRae
Reba Ellis
Chloe Caroline Rogers

Rebecca Rogers
Rebecca Rogers
Dawn & Chris Rogers

Jane & Jack Shore

David Stanfield

Merle & Ron Tedder

Robin Tesh

Frances Weaver

Kay Windsor

Nana & Deda

Nana & Deda

Bells of Joy

Dedicated by

Mavis Anderson

Audrey Bodenhamer

Beth & Bill Byrd

Beth & Bill Byrd

Carol & Evon Crooks

Carol & Evon Crooks

Patsy Dinkins & Family

Dan Franklin

Dan Franklin

Johnnie Hauser

Sarah & Steve Huddleston

Sarah & Steve Huddleston

Denise & Marcus Hunt

Chris Rogers

Dawn Greene Rogers

*Rebecca Rogers &
Chloe Rogers*

Johnnie Hauser

Christine Stanfield

*Our grandchildren:
Alex, Madison, Mitchell,
Jackson, Weston,
Aliza, Allister*

Martha Ridings

Staff of New Philadelphia

Bishop Sam & Lorena Gray

Molly MacReynolds

Ryan MacReynolds

Terri & Alan Queen

In Memory of

John F. Anderson

Bob G. Bodenhamer

Opal & Avery Byrd

Gretta & Ed Ashworth

Noel & Gloria Chambers

George & Marian Crooks

Henry Dinkins

Sabrina Ann Franklin

Helen & Clyde Dula

Jarvis Hauser

Mary & Jack Sparks

Theresa & J. C. Huddleston

Glenda Easley

Cindi & Wayne Jones
Cindi & Wayne Jones
Tamara, Julian, Cecilia, Shiloh
& Craig LaMontagne
Mary Ruth & Larry McRae
Bill Miller
Mary Jane Pickard
Nancy Renn
Rebecca Rogers
Sally & Mike Sloan
Sally & Mike Sloan
Chris & David Stanfield
Chris & David Stanfield
Sue Transou
Julia Turner
Cindy & Earl Wall
Becky & Tim Ward
Becky & Tim Ward
Frances Weaver

Deanna Williams
Deanna Williams
Deanna Williams
Kay Windsor

Mrs. Helen Iobst
Rt. Rev. Robert Iobst

Sabrina Franklin
Mr. & Mrs. Marion J. Sharpe
Jane Miller
Jane & Robert Hutchens
Tom Renn
James W. Rogers
Dorothy Ayers Sloan
Thornton Stafford Sloan
Hazel & Richard Binkley
Estelle & Hyams Stanfield
Bill Transou
Todd Turner
Betty Becker
Sylvia Kirby Flynn
Martha Wagner Ward
Howard & Ruby Smith,
Fred Smith
Lowell T. (Tom) Williams
Walter B. Bodenhamer, Sr.
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Elizabeth Windsor, Clendon
& Bill Newsom, Mike
Windsor



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