



# December 2025



## The Mountain Top Messenger

December 2025

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
<b>Altar Guild</b> Shannon Esala 715-292-0711  Eleanor Munson 715-682-8155	<b>1</b> 10:00am Bible Study  <b>Dartball</b> <b>7:00pm. Zion</b> <b>vs. Sanborn</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 5:00pm Soup & Sandwich (Altar Guild)  <b>6:00pm Advent</b> <b>Worship</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> National Play Outside Day. (really?)
<b>7</b> <b>8:45am Sunday</b> <b>School</b> <b>9:00am Worship</b> <b>Service</b> <b>9:15am</b> <b>Confirmation</b> 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm LGP	<b>8</b> 10:00am Bible Study  <b>Dartball</b> <b>7:00pm. Zion</b> <b>vs. Messiah</b>	<b>9</b> Lutefisk Day.	<b>10</b> 5:00pm Soup & Sandwich <b>6:00pm Advent</b> <b>Worship</b>	<b>11</b> 9:30am LFOJ Chapel	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 1:00pm Little Girls' Point 3rd An- nual Christmas Sing-a-Long  6:00pm LIFT Pizza Party Pizza Pub
<b>14</b> <b>8:45am</b> <b>Sunday School</b> <b>9:00am Worship</b> <b>Service</b> <b>9:15am</b> <b>Confirmation</b> 10:15am Bible Study	<b>15</b> 10:00am Bible Study  <b>Dartball</b> <b>7:00pm. Zion</b> <b>vs. Summit 1</b>	<b>16</b> 1:00pm Sewing Circle	<b>17</b> 1:00pm Hospice Group- Gathering  5:00pm Soup & Sandwich <b>6:00pm advent</b> <b>Worship</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> National Ugly Christmas Sweater Day.	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> <b>8:45am Sunday</b> <b>School</b> <b>9:00am Worship</b> <b>Service</b> <b>9:15am</b> <b>Confirmation</b> 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm LGP	<b>22</b>  5:30pm Council Mtg  <b>Dartball Bye</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>  <b>Christmas Eve</b> <b>4:00pm</b> <b>service</b> <b>7:00pm</b> <b>service</b>	<b>25</b>  <b>9:00am</b> <b>Christmas</b> <b>Day Service</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>  National Fruitcake Day.
<b>28</b> 9:00am Worship Service	<b>29</b>  <b>Dartball Bye</b>	<b>30</b> Bacon Day.	<b>31</b> No Service	<b>December [3 Andy] [7 JohnS]</b> <b>[10 Randy] [14 Andy] [17 Randy]</b> <b>[21 Doug]</b> <b>[4pm Scott Darryl] [24 7pm JohnS]</b> <b>[25 9:00am JohnP] [28 Darryl]</b> <b>January [4 JohnP] [7 Doug]</b>		

Happy December, Advent is here, we are preparing for our Lord and Savior's arrival. Both His first Advent and the long awaited second advent. We started our Advent with our opening service this past Sunday on the theme of "Who is This"? Truly the most important question in the world, for not knowing and believing who Jesus is, spells condemnation. Pretty harsh word, but a statement of truth and fact.

Believing comes from faith, and how does faith come,

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." (Romans 10:17).

Now, while we are told faith comes through hearing, it can also come through reading or seeing the Word. In my experience reading is fine, but true clarity seems to come through hearing, talking, discussing, sharing of God's Word. Many is the time where I have read a section of scripture, and it wasn't until speaking to or listening to someone else discuss that section did it really click. For those in our different Bible study groups we'll all agree, there are times when through hearing we have those great "Ah Ha! moments". When suddenly the Holy Spirit says, "now it is time for you to understand what that really means".

Now, you might wonder where is He going with this. Well, here is the point. Last month, I put out the request for you to offer up something you might like me to go over in one or more of my monthly newsletter covers. Sorry to say it, but, you all let me down, not a single response? That led me to two possible conclusions. First, no one read my newsletter cover last month or none of you have any questions? So, for this month I chose my own topic.

It has to do with an email I received from an organization called Barna. Now Barna is a highly regarded and reputable Christian survey organization and they are constantly releasing all kinds of survey data about Christianity in the United States and the world today. A few weeks ago they released a new study entitled: "How Millennials and Gen Z are driving a Bible Reading Comeback". A couple of the key points were;

\*Weekly Bible reading among U.S. adults has climbed to 42%, up 12 points since a 15 year low in 2024.

\*Next, young adults lead the way, nearly half of Gen Z and Millennial are engaged in Scripture weekly. On the down side; reading out paces belief, While more Americans are reading the Bible, a smaller percentage affirms its authority, revealing a gap between curiosity and conviction.

I found all of these things very interesting, more reading but not more believing, so I asked myself where is the disconnect. After reading more deeply into their survey and all the graphs and charts

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and tables I believe, I began to see the disconnect. I think it is kind of like the Bible Study group who haven't had their "Ah Ha moment" yet. Their reading, but perhaps not fully understanding it, they aren't having the studies, they aren't getting the questions answered when they don't understand.

The more I read this the more I was reminded of the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts Chapter 8. An angel of the Lord tells Philip to go to the desert road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. There Philip sees the Ethiopian eunuch going to the road in a chariot and he is reading the book of Isaiah. The Spirit tells Philip to "Go to that chariot and stay near it." So Philip is running down the road beside the chariot as the eunuch is reading Isaiah, and Philip asked him "Do you understand what you are reading"? To which the eunuch replied: *"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?"*

So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Philip then explains the passage to the eunuch. The scriptures became clear to him through Philips explanation, so much so that they stopped the chariot on the side of the road and baptized the eunuch in water on the side of the road. (from Acts 8:26-40).

Anyway, a long way to get to my point, I can't help but believe many of those young people who are now reading the Bible are in need of help, in need of someone to help make it clear. So that rather than just reading an old book with some good points, they can understand that it is indeed the inspired word of God, put forth of their eternal salvation.

I am currently working on ways that I, we, may be able to help those people. Think about it, pray about it, let me know what you think. How might we, as both individuals and as the Church, help those who are looking for answers. I will be awaiting for your responses or at the very least, a thumbs up to let me know you read my article.

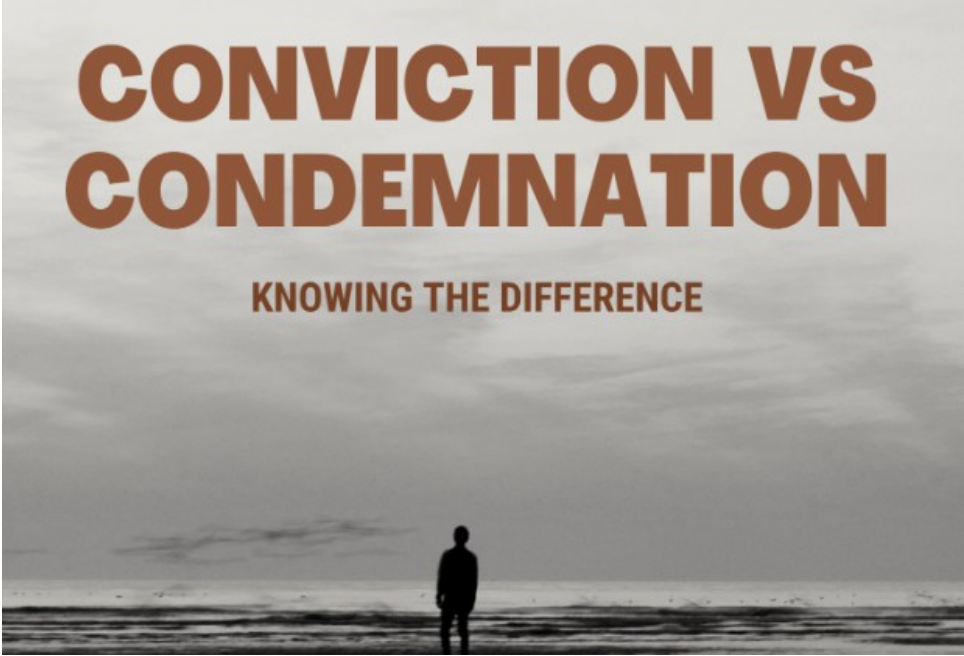
Reminder, Advent Wednesdays start on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and we will be having soup and sandwiches dinner for each of the 3 Wednesdays starting at 5:00. I look forward to seeing you all there, I am also looking for to having egg salad sandwiches and maybe even some pea soup.

God bless you all and Merry Christmas!

And as always:

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

Pastor Rick



**Zion Lutheran Church Council  
November 17, 2025**

**Call To Order** – John Pruss, President  
**Opening prayer** – Pastor Rick Williams  
**Roll Call** - President, Jphn Pruss  
Trustees, Nick Jarvela  
Treasurer, Tiffany Darling  
Evangelism, No  
Pastor Williams

Elders & Education, Darryl Warren  
Secretary, Jule Jarvela  
Financial Secretary, Tami Thimm  
LFOJ, No

**Approval Minutes** – No October meeting  
**Pastor's Report** – hosting Winkel on 20<sup>th</sup>, attended Pastor's Conference in Wausau, preparing for Advent, new computers on line  
**Approval of Treasurer's Report** – 1- Nick Jarvela 2- Tami Thimm MMC  
**Approval of Agenda for this Meeting** - 1- Darryl Warren 2- Nick Jarvela MMC  
**Board Reports**  
**Elders & Education** – No  
**Trustees** – Winterizing Church and LFOJ  
**Financial Secretary** – No  
**Evangelism** – Working on Student Care Packages, organizing Soup & Sandwich Suppers prior to Advent services

**Official Acts**  
Wedding – Taylor Vyskocil & Carson Honkala 09-20-2025  
Wedding – Brianna Klobucher & John Sechen 10-10-2025  
Death – Sheri Gurske 10-16-2025

**Old Business**  
**Church security** – John Pruss will look for program to inform Church members  
**Copier** – Will not replace at this time, will look into maintenance only 1- Darryl Warren 2- Tiffany Darling MMC

**New Business**  
**Elevator** -Will check into costs of elevator repair and inspectors  
**Soup & Sandwich suppers** – Week 1- Altar Guild, Week 2 – Elders & Trustees, Week 3 – Evangelism Potluck  
**Insurance** – Pastor and Nick Jarvela met with Mike Sherry to discuss options for lowering the cost of the Church insurance. Council will meet with the LFOJ Board on December 1, 2025 at 6:30 to discuss the options.

**Next Church Council meeting** – December 18, 2025  
**Adjournment** 1- Nick Jarvela 2- Darryl Warren MMC  
**Lord's Prayer**  
Respectfully Submitted, Jule Jarvela, Secretary





NOVEMBER LFOJ NEWSLETTER



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH  
1111—11TH AVE WEST

Totville News: Happy Thanksgiving from the Infant Room.

This month we are reading the Bible stories of Jonah and the Big Fish, Simon and His Boat, The man who couldn't see, and The man who said Thank you. We have talked about saying thank you to others and to Jesus. Also, we have talked about things to be thankful for.

Happy Birthday to Linnea. She was a year old on the 21st! It seems not long ago that we had a room full of infants. Now there's only two under a year old. The older children are beginning to recite the table prayers and words to the songs we frequently sing. "A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor." -Proverbs 22:9

Let us be thankful for all that we have and remember those less fortunate.  
-Denise and Nikki

Toddler Titbits: Winter is coming!

Please make sure your child has a pair of snowpants at school so that everyone has a chance to play outside. We will be continuing our theme of "Family" throughout the Holidays, so if you have time, please send in a family photo so we can add it to our Family Tree wall. We are working hard on shape recognition. Ask your kids to look for shapes around the house! I bet they will love to show you the "shape hunt" game they play at school! Happy Holidays!  
-Jane, Michelle, and Lael

**Learner Lane:** Our themes this month have included fall leave and trees, fall harvest, woodland animals, turkeys, and Thanksgiving. We have read about King Saul, King David, Hannah's prayer, and Samson.

Our room now has a lost and found. It is located next to all the hooks. Be sure to check it out!

It has gotten cold fast! Please be sure your child has all the appropriate gear for playing outside.  
-Hanna and Kate

COOK'S CORNER Easy Chicken Quesadillas

Ingredients:

- 4 large flour tortillas
- 1 cup cooked, shredded chicken (rotisserie chicken works great)
- 2 cups shredded cheese (cheddar, Monterey Jack, or a mix)
- Optional additions: canned black beans (rinsed), corn, finely diced bell peppers, or spinach
- Cooking spray or a little oil/butter for the pan
- For dipping: salsa, sour cream, or guacamole

**Instructions:** Prepare your fillings: In a bowl, mix the shredded chicken, cheese, and any optional fillings you choose to use. Heat the pan: Place a large skillet or griddle over medium heat and lightly coat it with cooking spray or a thin layer of oil/butter.

Assemble the quesadillas: Lay one tortilla in the pan. Sprinkle an even layer of the chicken and cheese mixture over one half of the tortilla. Cook and fold: Cook for a few minutes until the bottom starts to lightly brown and the cheese begins to melt. Carefully fold the empty half of the tortilla over the filling to create a half-moon shape. Flip: Gently flip the quesadilla and cook for another 2-3 minutes until both sides are golden brown and the cheese is fully melted. Serve: Remove the quesadilla from the pan, let it cool slightly, and then cut it into wedges. Serve immediately with your favorite dipping sauces.

LFOJ WISH LIST/NEEDS

**Monthly:** Regular paper towel and/or Tri Fold paper towel Toilet Paper Fragrance Free Baby Wipes Kleenex (facial tissue) Hand soap (unscented, antibacterial) Great value brand canned fruits in juice (not syrup) Natural peanut butter Ragu spaghetti sauce Parent's choice gentle baby formula (must be iron-fortified) Graham crackers Vanilla wafers Prego alfredo sauce Tomato soup Elbow noodles All natural ketchup (no high fructose corn syrup) Foam Tumbling mats Thin Pretzel sticks Quart or Gallon Double Ziplock bags Goldfish, Whale, or Penguin crackers Robot Vacuum (self-emptying) Plexiglass picture board (kid friendly)

Sunday Worship Service 9:00am live streamed  
Wednesday Evening Service 6:00pm  
Sunday School - 1st .– 7th grade Sunday 8:45am (Sept.-May)  
Bible Studies  
Sunday 10:15am Monday 10:00am (Sept.-May)

Church phone - 715-682-6075  
Pastor Rick Williams - 715-209-0479  
Office Hours: M /T/Th 9-5 Wed. 12-8 Fri. off  
Please call ahead if you need to speak with Pastor.  
Office Secretary Lynn Ladd 715-682-6075 Office Hours M/T/Wed 8:30-2:30  
Days and times may change.  
Church President: John Pruss 715-292-4825 Head Elder: Darryl Warren 715-492-0488  
Little Friends of Jesus Child Care Center: 715-682-5185  
LFOJ Administrator: Desiree Niemann-682-6075

**PRAYERS for Homebound, Assisted Living, Nursing Home**  
Those who aren't able to attend common worship that they would find comfort knowing that the Lord is with them.

Arlene Zimmerman  
Violet Basina

**PRAYERS FOR PROTECTION**  
For our full-time troops and public servants, for travel, missionaries, and for peace and protection for families.

David Wright  
Jordan Thimm  
Andrew Pruss

**PRAYERS FOR HEALTH AND HEALING**  
For good test results, treatment, positive thinking, healing, and comfort during cancer treatments, for those suffering from addiction, mental illness and for healing, strength, comfort, and peace for family we pray for:

Brad Prill	Vi Basina	James Fletcher
Harold Larson	Linda Stenroos	Don Pocernich
Tim Erickson	Patty Hmielewski	Pam Ekholm
Don Pocernich	Jamie Klema	Keith Tveit
Rick Kallio	Cheryl Hildebrandt	Mary Dahl
Mike Trimble	Molly Colgrove	Linda Parrish
Chuck Sandor	Dwayne Lynch	Tom Anderson
Karl Wellnitz	Octavia Pearce	Kevin Heggie
Larry Hildebrandt	Cindy Lazorik	Tracy Thompson
Clyde Sukanen	Bonnie Jansehski	Camden & Brooks Balmer
Karen	Wayne	Casey
Chuck	Betsy	Marsha

And those in our hearts

Dear Lord, "We come to You today with heavy hearts, as we lift up those who are in need of prayer. We ask that You would bring healing and restoration to their body, mind, and spirit" Amen.







We Would Like To Invite You To Join Us For Our

## 3rd ANNUAL LGP CHRISTMAS SING-A-LONG!!

Saturday - December 13, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

*Wear your favorite ugly Christmas  
Sweater • Necklace • Socks • Earrings • Whatever  
To celebrate this Christmas Season!!*



### Immanuel Lutheran Church

*Little Girl's Point  
E1898 Brace Road  
Ironwood, Michigan*

*Come ready to  
share good cheer,  
good company  
and good songs!*



## Making a Difference – Peru Mission

**Rev. Dr. Dwayne & Cheryl Lueck recently traveled to Peru and represented the North WI District at the Peru FORO. Rev. Lueck shared the following...**

MAKING A DIFFERENCE Recently Cheryl and I had the opportunity to travel to Lima, Peru to see the mission work currently taking place and to encourage the workers who have been supported by the North Wisconsin District since 2013. On Friday we visited Castillo Forte (“a mighty fortress” in Spanish) where the children attend weekdays after school to receive a meal, have Bible time, do crafts, have time for recess and close with chapel. These children greeted our team with hugs and gifts and sang a song especially for us.

On Saturday night, in the same building, they have a worship service. Cheryl was talking with Mercedes, the cook at Castillo Forte, after worship. She said, “You don’t know how important it is that the children see your team here. We tell the children your gifts allow them to have their lunch. These children come with lots of shortcomings.” Then she wiped tears from her eyes.

In Lima there are three different worship sites – La Victoria (where Castillo Forte is located), Los Olivos, and San Borja. Presently Pastor Raphael, a pastor on loan from Brazil Lutheran Church, is serving the people along with Pastor Abraham, who works part-time. We were able to visit all three sites and worship at two of them.

We were part of a FORO which means “forum” in English. This FORO is made up of different entities from the US that specifically support the Peru mission. Representation at the FORO included us from the North Wisconsin District, Pastor Merker from the Southeastern District LCMS, a couple from Ascension Lutheran in Burnsville, Minnesota, Pastor Ted Krey who is the lead missionary in Latin America and works in the Dominican Republic, and missionary James Sharp from Puerto Rico who helps advise the Peru church.

We discussed the current work taking place and learned about the challenges and future plans. Right now they need a new facility for Castillo Forte as they need additional space for more children. The facility at San Borja needs remodeling for a worship area that can hold more than 30 people. There is a hope that an LCMS pastor will soon be joining the staff so they can meet the needs of the people in all three areas.

Finally, it’s all about bringing Jesus to people in an urban area. Yulanka, a former student at Castillo Forte, received a college degree in psychology and may soon be the director at the same place she grew up. She is a member at La Victoria and recently brought her parents, brothers and niece to church. They have all been baptized and confirmed at La Victoria. Yulanka’s boyfriend is also coming to confirmation class. They are all learning that “God is our (their) refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1)

Yepci, the present director of Castillo Forte, texted Cheryl: “Thank you very much for your support in expanding God’s work. Many blessings to you.” So we would like to extend that blessing and sincere thanks to you, the congregations and members of the North Wisconsin District. Your mission offerings to the NWD contribute support for the workers at the Peru mission along with purchasing meals for the children. You are making a difference!

Blessings, Rev. Dr. Dwayne Lueck, District President Emeritus



FROM THE DISTRICT PRESENT

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!” (1 Chronicles 16:34 ESV)

I enjoy some simple things like fresh blacktop and clear ice cubes.

Old Testament Hannah was not concerned with life’s trivialities. Hannah did not even have a son. She cried. She prayed passionately and God answered. Hannah gave birth to Samuel. What did she do next? She kept her vow. She gave Samuel into the Lord’s service. Her vow was not to give him up for a summer or two when he turned eighteen. She promised, “I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life” (1 Samuel 1:11). After weaning Samuel, she brought him, the very son she received in answer to prayer, to the House of the LORD. Imagine giving up your three-year-old for special training away from home for a lifetime of service not knowing if you would see him more than once a year. Hannah gives thanks to the Lord by returning to Him the very thing for which she prayed.

There is a significant difference between simple things and family members. Ice cubes melt, pavement wears out, they cost money, and they do not care. My wife, children, and grandchildren love me, care about me, and I love them all. Nancy works hard and makes me laugh. For years I watched her willingly sacrifice sleep and never spend a dime on herself if it meant caring for our children and providing what she believed they needed. She enjoys our children and their families, prays for them every day, and keeps showing me how to enjoy what matters most. Recently, when I drove into our daughter's driveway, Nancy was holding a five-foot long blue hollow plastic tube at a 45-degree angle over a larger yellow Tonka dump truck. Peter and Theo, two of our grandsons, were busy dropping walnut sized rocks one at a time into the top of the tube and watching them come out below. The dump truck was half-full, not ready yet for one of the boys to drive it away. It was so dear to see. How could Old Testament Hannah have given up little Samuel?

What are the names of the people God has given you to love and care about, and to thank Him for? For what else will you give Him thanks this month and throughout the year? As I type this Thanksgiving devotion, I am completing week fifteen in my role as district president. I thank the Lord for the privilege, and for aspects of ministry happening across our North Wisconsin District. Pastor Hanson, from Pilgrim, Green Bay, has agreed to lead our district missions team to help us expand our NWD national and international missions footprint. Meanwhile, the first group of congregations is working through a “church clarity” four-session process to form a ministry plan with reachable goals. Regarding the fostering of Lutheran education, DJ, from the district office, is leading our effort to support our Lutheran schools, classical education opportunities, and to expand our participation in and support for home-schooling cooperatives. Pastor Baye, from Hope, DePere, is completing his Doctor of Ministry studies regarding the role of fathers in shaping the faith of their children. We have asked him to chair our district’s Family Ministry emphasis. We aim to start with simple things, like providing pastors little note cards with a short prayer printed on them to hand to dads, and to ask them to kneel with their toddlers at bedtime to pray.

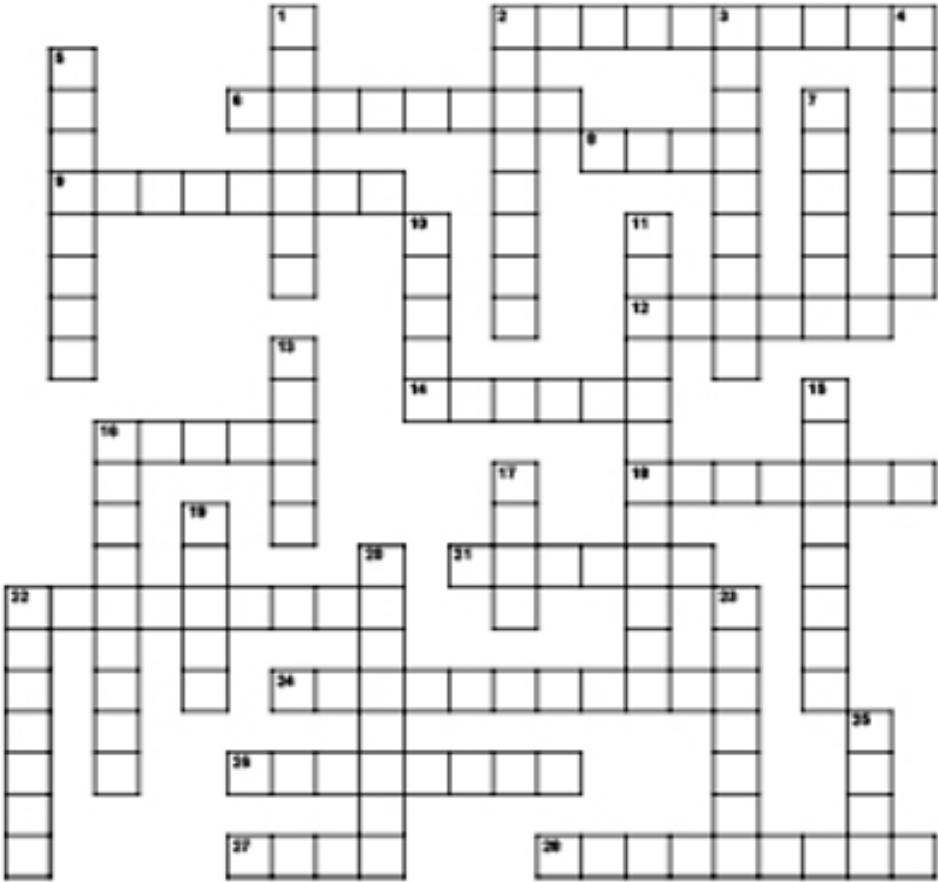
It all relates to Hannah. She gave up her son Samuel into a lifetime of service. Even more, our Father in heaven gave Jesus into a lifetime of holy service, and unto eternal damnation for us and for our salvation.

It seems silly to mention things like ice cubes and blacktop. Our heavenly Father is pleased to provide all things for us, simple pleasures too. Let us give thanks to God for all, for people to love and who love us, for food, for good work, important ministry, for simple pleasures, and above all, for His only Son, our Savior.

Oh give thanks unto the LORD for He is good, and His mercy endures forever. Amen.

Pastor Shoup  
Rev. Timothy J. Shoup  
District President, North Wisconsin District LCMS

Christmas Is Here



Bells	Mittens
Candy Cane	North Pole
Card	Ornament
Carol	Presents
Chimney	Reindeer
Christmas	Rudolph
Coal	Santa Claus
Cookies	Sleigh
December	Snowball
Elves	Snowman
Family	Star
Gingerbread	Stocking
Hot Chocolate	Tinsel
Icicle	Workshop
Jolly	Xmas
Mistletoe	

“Under the Same Management for over 141 Years” Zion Lutheran Church

“Honk If You Love Jesus

Text While Driving If You Want to Meet Him”

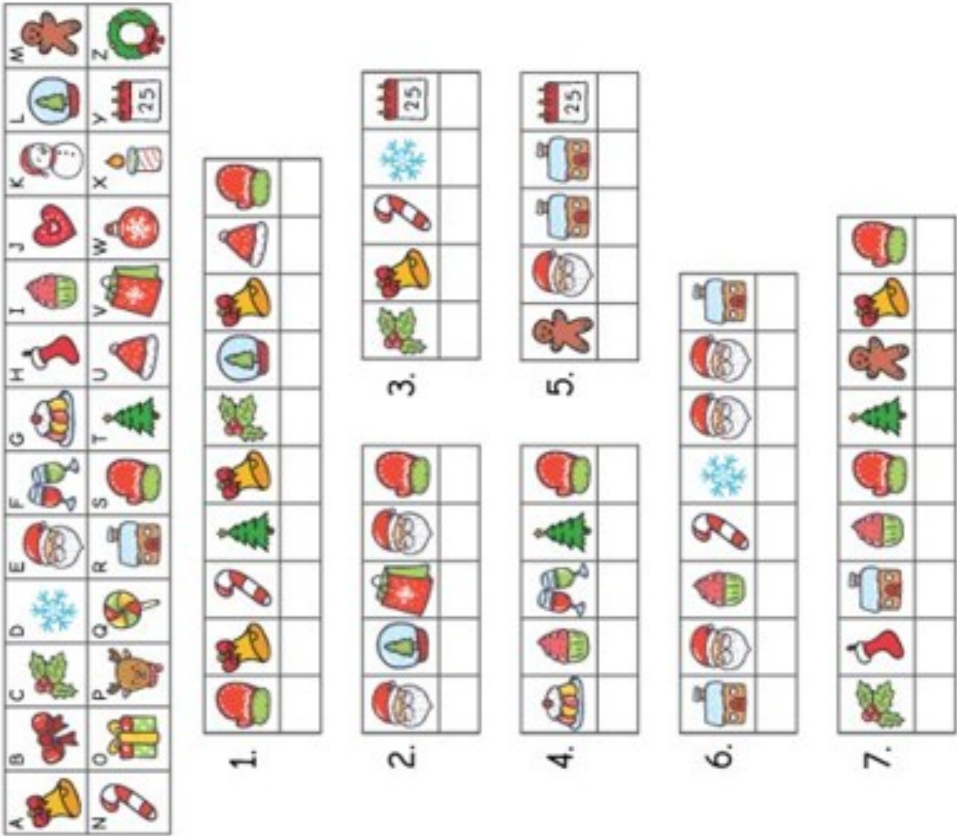
“God Recycles  
He Made You From Dust”

“Forgive Your Enemies—It Messes With Their Heads”

“I asked God for patience, and He gave me a child.”

“The only time my prayers are never answered is when I forget to ask.”

“I know God won’t give me anything I can’t handle. I just wish He didn’t trust me so much.” – Mother Teresa





My childhood church had a kitchen in the back. One day while looking around, I saw a wooden plaque with a button. The button didn't work. That was when I read the sign above the plaque: "When you are through using the kitchen, push button to summon a servant to clean up. If there is no response, refer to [Matthew 20:25-28](#) for further instruction. Thank you."

# CHURCH LIBRARY

You've heard it said that what goes into your brain molds your thoughts, words, and deeds. What is molding you? Television, the news, video games, popular magazines? Do you need a better food source for your Christian walk? **Check out these new items in our church library.**

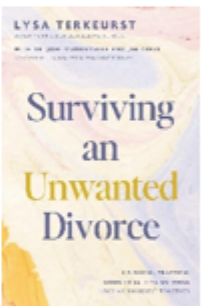
- culture and faith?
- marriage, divorce, sex, dating
- freedom from fear and worry
- Science and Religion
- raising children, teenagers
- my grandchild is dating a Muslim
- loneliness and the Christian
- illness and death



**Get Out of Your Head: Stopping the Spiral of Toxic Thoughts** by Jennie Allen  
Are your thoughts holding you captive? *I'll never be good enough. Other people have better lives than I do. God couldn't really love me.* Jennie Allen knows what it's like to swirl in a spiral of destructive thoughts, but she also knows we don't have to stay stuck in toxic thinking patterns. Learn how to exercise your God-given power to shift negative thinking patterns and take back control of your thoughts and emotions.

## Surviving an Unwanted Divorce: A Biblical, Practical Guide to Letting Go While Holding Yourself Together

by Lysa TerKeurst, Jim Cress  
When Lysa TerKeurst experienced the painful and unwanted death of her marriage after nearly thirty years, she didn't know who to turn to or what would actually help her. She needed to get her bearings on what the Bible really says about marriage and divorce. She also needed the tools to work through the fallout she was walking through. This answers some of your toughest questions about how to move on, even when your marriage doesn't,



**Forgiving What You Can't Forget: Discover How to Move On, Make Peace with Painful Memories, and Create a Life That's Beautiful Again** by Lysa TerKeurst  
#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER  
Take back your life from pain and resentment as you move into the freedom of forgiveness. Have you ever felt stuck in a cycle of unresolved pain, playing offenses over and over in your mind? Lysa TerKeurst has wrestled through this journey and discovered how to let go of bound-up resentment and overcome the resistance to forgiving people who aren't willing to make things right.

## Don't Call It a Comeback: The Old Faith for a New Day (The Gospel Coalition)

by Kevin DeYoung (Editor)  
Recent cultural interest in evangelicalism has led to confusion about what the term actually means. But evangelicalism is not merely a political movement in decline or a sociological phenomenon on the rise. It a theological profile that asserts the stability, relevance, and necessity of Christian orthodoxy today.



Continued on next



# LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES

Isaiah 51:4-6 – "Give attention to Me, My people, and give ear to Me, My nation; for a law will go out from Me, and I will set My justice for a light to the peoples. My righteousness draws near, My salvation has gone out, and My arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for Me, and for My arm they wait. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will never be dismayed."

I got some old family pictures from my Dad in the mail today, from the early 1980s. I couldn't help laughing at some of the clothes they showed me wearing! To the best of my knowledge, none of those clothes are still around today; clothing wears out and has to be replaced, even favorite pieces. And that can be sad, if the piece we're having to replace is one we love.

We realize that clothes are temporary—but we don't usually think of heaven and earth this way, too. And yet that is what God says—that creation in its current form is passing away; "the heavens vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment." It will do us no good if our hearts are bound up in anything in the current world order; sooner or later it will be gone.

What then can we trust? What will last forever? What is safe for us to set our hearts on? God tells us: "My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will never be dismayed." Jesus Himself is our righteousness and our salvation, and He will never leave us or abandon us; if we love Him, we will have the One we love forever. Death cannot take Him, for He has already suffered and died in order to make us clean, forgiven, beloved children of God; and He has risen from the dead, never to die again. Because Jesus lives, we too will live forever; and we will live with Him and one another in joy when the present heavens and earth are a memory, pictures from the past.

So what can we love that will last forever? God Himself, who loved us first; and God's people, to whom He has given eternal life. For when Jesus holds us in His hands, we can never be lost from Him or one another.

**WE PRAY:** Lord, set my heart on You forever, and help me when I grieve for what is passing away. Amen.



# Bible Verses to Live By: Advent —a Season of Waiting

Contributing Editor Rick Hamlin shares Scripture to help you observe the season of Advent.

Advent is a season of waiting—for Santa Claus. For the Christ Child. For the presents under the tree. We know very well what we're waiting for. But do we see the spiritual gifts that come with the waiting?



### Wait for the Lord

*Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.—Isaiah 40:31*

When my mom's minister visited on what turned out to be her last day on earth, she asked him to read this Bible verse. At the time, I thought it was a curious choice. No longer. In her own way, Mom was preparing us, her four kids by her hospital bedside, for what was to come, showing us that waiting for the Lord is a source of strength.

### Be Patient

*Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and late rains.—*

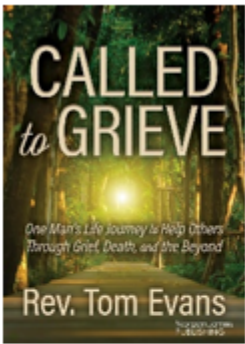
**James 5:7**

The word *Advent* is derived from the Latin for "to come." Not only Christ's coming that first Christmas at Bethlehem but also the promise that Christ will come again. In waiting, we celebrate past, present and future joy all at once.

### Be Strong

*Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord.—Psalm 27:14*

Admittedly, the season of waiting can be the hardest part. "Oh, Lord, how long?" we might ask if we've been praying for a while. In the end, we discover that our prayers have been answered, often in ways that we would never have expected. Think of what extraordinary things the shepherds and wise men must have seen. Wonders beyond their wildest imaginings.



### Called to Grieve: One Man's Life Journey to Help Others Through Grief, Death, and the Beyond

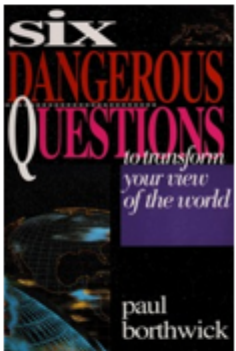
by Rev. Tom Evans

Everyone will experience grief in their lifetime, and everyone will face death—whether it's walking a loved one through the dying process or facing it oneself. No one is alone in this journey. The question is, how do people face grief and grow from it? With the right knowledge and understanding of grief, people can work through it. Death does not have to be scary. It has become institutionalized; now it's time to bring death back to being a natural part of life that everyone can face without fear.

### Six Dangerous Questions to Transform Your View of the World

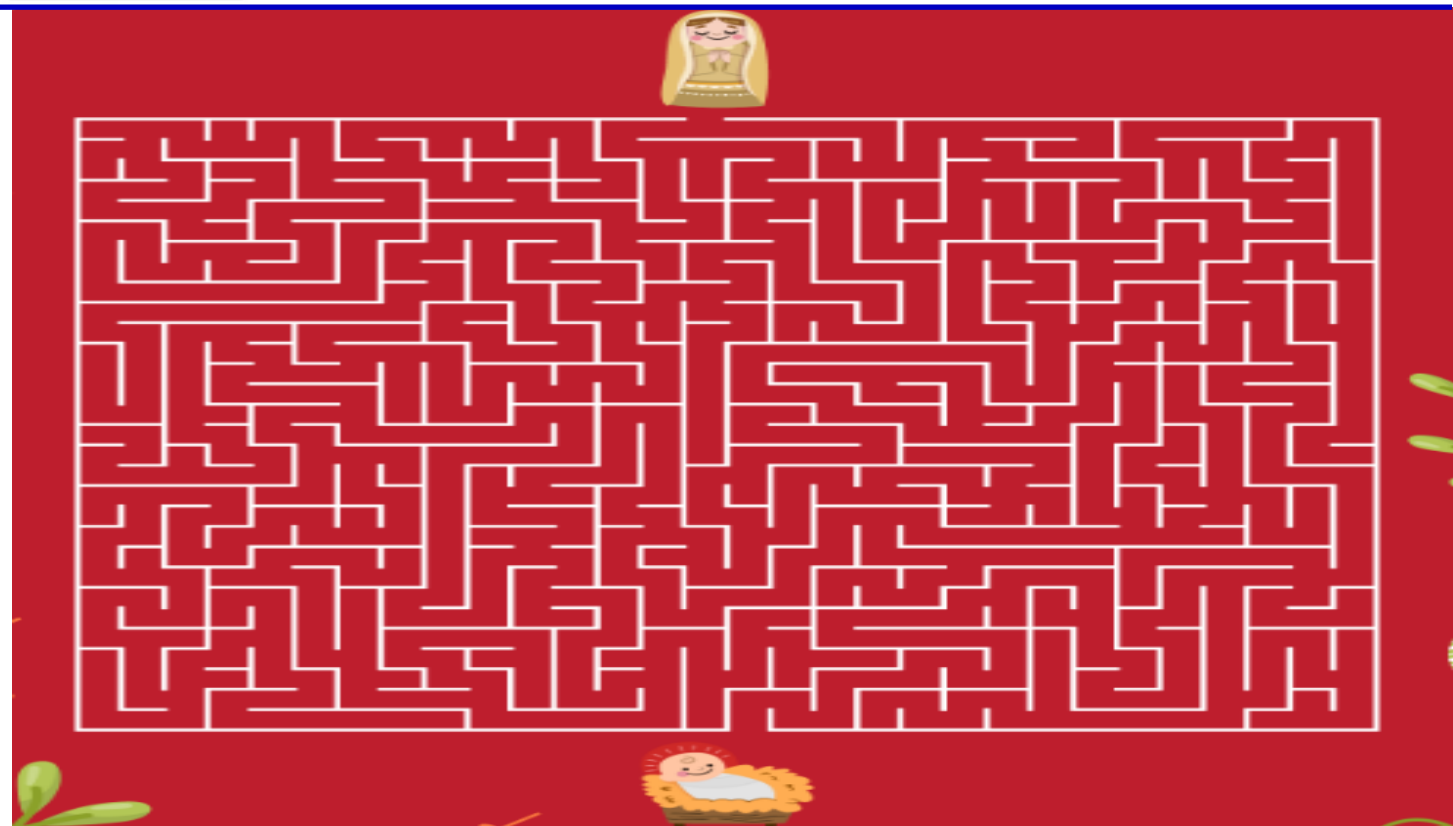
by Paul Borthwick

The author poses six thought-provoking questions that challenge you to examine other countries, cultures, ethnic groups, and the impact of your faith. Answering the questions won't result in your immediate departure for the jungle or the desert—probably. But answering will very likely cause you to reorder your priorities, refocus your interests, and even change your everyday choices: what to read, what to buy, what to do over the weekend. That's why reading this book is dangerous. But, then, Jesus never promised that following him would be risk-free.



### House of David: Season 1 DVD

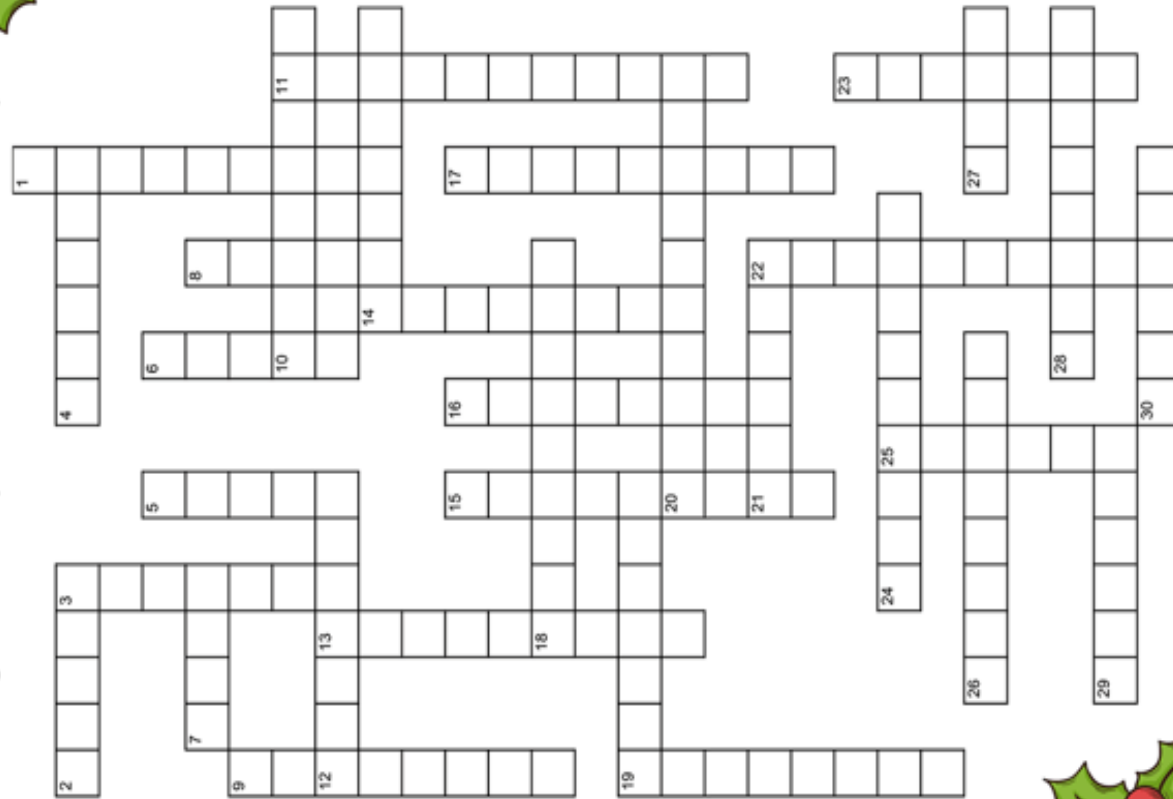
House of David tells the story of the ascent of the biblical figure, David, who eventually becomes the most renowned and celebrated king of Israel. The series follows the once-mighty King Saul as he falls victim to his own pride. At the direction of God, the prophet Samuel anoints an unlikely, outcast teenager as the new king. David finds himself on a journey to discover and fulfill his destiny, navigating love, loss, and violence in the court of the very man he's destined to replace. As one leader falls, another must rise.





# Christmas Joy

DIRECTIONS: Fill in the crossword grid with the provided words.



4 Letter Words

BELL  
SNOW

5 Letter Words

ANGEL  
COCOA  
ELVES  
HOLLY

6 Letter Words

LIGHTS  
SLEIGH  
TINSEL  
WINTER  
WREATH

7 Letter Words

CHIMNEY  
GARLAND  
PAGEANT  
RUDOLPH  
SNOWMAN

8 Letter Words

CAROLING  
DECEMBER  
EXCHANGE  
ORNAMENT  
PRESENTS  
REINDEER  
WRAPPING

9 Letter Words

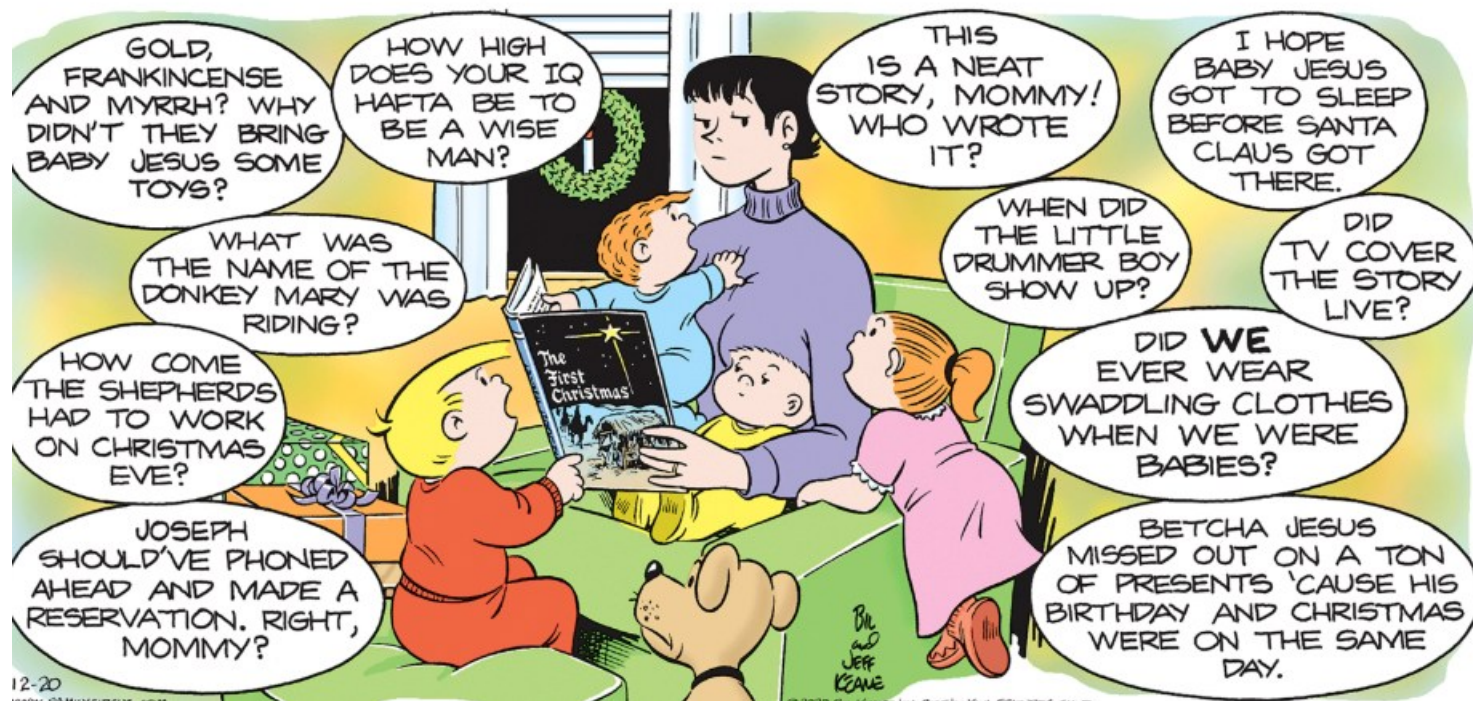
CHESTNUTS  
CHRISTMAS  
EVERGREEN  
FRUITCAKE  
MISTLETOE  
NORTH POLE

10 Letter Words

POINSETTIA  
SANTA CLAUS

11 Letter Word

GINGERBREAD



## Everyday Blessings: Power Restored Sabra Ciancanelli

A snow-related power outage that began as an inconvenience I woke to darkness and lay in bed going over the busy day ahead of me. Finally I got up and flicked on the light switch—nothing happened. I checked my phone. No Wi-Fi, no data. With our spotty cell service, there was no way of knowing if we had received outage alerts or school cancellation emails.



I grabbed a sweater and went downstairs, found a flashlight and a match to light the gas stove, then boiled water to brew coffee. Out the window, the falling snow obscured the sunrise. Snowdrifts covered the road.

My work meetings and deadlines, my sons' classes and tests, my husband's plans—everything would have to wait. God, why did this happen today of all days? I asked. Thankfully, the woodstove was still going strong. I took a deep breath and thought, I suppose we have everything we need.

The house was quiet as I sipped my coffee and cuddled our dog. One by one, my husband and sons came downstairs and groaned at the turn the day had taken.

I opened the curtains to let in light. We gathered at the table and had cereal. After breakfast, my husband played a game of solitaire. Then my sons joined him in building a house of cards that reached three levels...until our cat jumped up to investigate and knocked it down. We played a round of Scrabble and had my favorite snow day lunch: grilled cheese and tomato soup.

We took a long walk in the woods behind our house, trudging through the drifts along the stream. We spotted deer tracks and played in the snow that was coming down in big fluffy flakes. When we returned, all the clocks in the house were blinking. I started to make dinner, happy to have things back to normal—even better than normal.

A day that began without electricity, cut off from the rest of the world, ended with hot chocolate and power restored. Recharged by the unexpected gift of a day together.

Bil Keane's warm, humorous portraits of the intimate moments in family life, based on his own real-life family circus, have charmed readers around the world since 1960. Today, [The Family Circus](#) is the most widely syndicated comic panel in the world, appearing in nearly 1,500 newspapers. The daily panels are routinely drawn within a circle, meant to underscore the sense of closeness between the characters. More than 70 collections of the cartoons have been published, and the panel's characters have inspired three TV specials and appeared in a wide variety of educational and public-service projects.

## ABOUT THE FAMILY CIRCUS

While Keane's cartoon kids have stayed the same age for decades, his real-life kids have grown up, and two followed in their father's creative footsteps. Glen is now a prominent animator for The Walt Disney Company, and Jeff worked with his dad for years in creating the comic panel until Bil's death in November of 2011. And today, Bil's family circus of nine grandchildren and one great grandchild provide a whole new generation of ideas.



# Have You Ever ...

- Opened a present early without permission.
- Sung Christmas carols door-to-door.
- Burned cookies while trying to bake for Christmas.
- Slept under the Christmas tree.
- Sent a holiday card to someone I've never met.
- Bought matching Christmas pajamas.
- Seen real reindeer in person.
- Fallen asleep while watching a Christmas movie.
- Wrapped a gift using newspaper.
- Made homemade Christmas ornaments.
- Got caught snacking on Santa's cookies.
- Worn an ugly Christmas sweater in public.
- Stayed outside to watch snow fall at midnight.
- Built a snowman on Christmas Day.
- Built a gingerbread village instead of one house.
- Accidentally broke a Christmas ornament.
- Made a snow angel wearing pajamas.
- Given someone a funny Christmas prank gift.
- Joined a Christmas parade.

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

ADVENT	INFANT	MYRRH
ANGEL	JESUS	NATIVITY
BETHLEHEM	JOSEPH	REJOICE
BIRTH	MAGI	STABLE
BLESSINGS	MANGER	STAR
CAMELS	MARY	THREE KINGS
FRANKINCENSE	MIRACLE	WISE MEN

## Meet Me On the Mountain



### In the Word

*And many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us his ways and that we may walk in His paths" (Micah 4:2a).*

### Of the Word

Mount Monadnock rises 3,165 feet in southern New Hampshire. It is said that it is the second most hiked mountain in the world, second only to Mount Fuji in Japan. On a clear day, climbers can see all of the New England states from the summit. In the fall, the view is spectacular with all the reds, oranges, yellows, and greens of the tree foliage. The air is crisp and clean. When you reach the summit of the mountain, it is breathtaking!

The climb to the top is not particularly easy. Hikers need to be prepared with the right shoes and drinking water, and be physically fit to make the climb. There are several trails, and all are well marked. Some of the paths are more difficult than others, requiring more skill, but all trails require climbing over a lot of granite rocks! A lot of the fun in the journey to the top comes when hiking with a friend and passing many friendly people on the way up and down. Sometimes you may even see someone carrying a child on his shoulders.

Our lives are a big journey as we travel this earthly path to heaven. We meet many people on the trails of life. Some will help us, while we will need to help others. We will travel on some easy parts of the trail, but there will also be places we will need to climb over, or around, those large granite rocks.

We need to prepare ourselves for life's journey by clothing ourselves in His righteousness and refreshing ourselves with the Living Water from God's holy Word. We need to keep our spiritual selves in good shape along the trail by staying close to our guide, Jesus Christ. God marks the trail for us. We need only listen to Him and look for His guidance revealed through His Word. He also sends fellow travelers to share the road and to help show us the way.

We are reassured that God is always faithful and will lead us, walk beside us, and when necessary, carry us.

God sprinkles "mountaintop" experiences throughout our lives. With these joyful events, He provides us a foretaste of heaven, a mountaintop adventure at the end of our earthly journey.

### Walking with my Lord

Lord, thank You for the path You have set for my life's journey. I praise You that my ultimate destination and resting place will be heaven. Give me the strength I need for each day's walk. Remind me that I only need to take this journey one day at a time. As I travel through this life, thank You for being beside me always and for leading me to the mountaintop. Amen.





# Hebrews 1:1–14

## Something Better

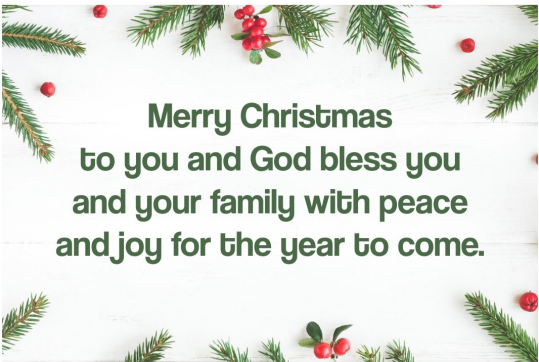
The book of Hebrews addresses Christians in Rome undergoing persecution sometime close to 64 AD when Christians began dying for their faith under Nero. The book is a clarion call to not return to Judaism, which was a legal religion while Christianity had become an illegal religion.

The author urges people to remain faithful to their Christian confession (Heb 3:1; 4:14; 10:23), warns against drifting away and neglecting salvation (Heb 2:1, 3), points out the danger of losing confidence in God’s promises (Heb 3:6) and falling away from the faith (Heb 3:12). People were tempted to become rebellious and unbelieving like Israel (Heb 3:16–19) for they had not progressed into Christian adulthood (Heb 5:11–6:2). They had experienced God’s saving gifts in Christ but may end up rejecting him (Heb 6:4–6; 10:29; 12:25). Sluggishness (Heb 6:12) could lead to something far worse—apostasy (Heb 10:26). Thus, repeatedly the author reminds people that in Christ, they have something better.

I’m therefore calling our Advent and Christmas emphasis *Something Better*. Hebrews repeatedly explains the gifts God gives Israel through Moses and then promises that we have something much better! My preaching plans are as follows:

- Advent 1 “**A Better Word**” (Hebrews 1:1–2)
- Advent 2 “**A Better Glory**” (Hebrews 1:3a)
- Advent 3 “**A Better Absolution**” (Hebrews 1:3b)
- Christmas Eve “**A Better Name**” (Hebrews 1:4–14)

Dear Lord, don't let us miss You this Christmas season. Help us to simplify our activities and traditions so we can focus our celebration on Your birth. Thank You for being the Prince of Peace, and I ask You for that supernatural peace to reign in our hearts. Thank You for the simple but life-changing message of Your love for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.





# Jesus... Reason For The Season

Printables 4 Less

Be First To Fill In Blanks To Questions About Jesus Using Words Provided.

1. — Which angel appeared to Mary?	A. Isaiah
2. — Who was father of Joseph the husband of Mary?	B. Anna
3. — Where was Jesus born?	C. Shepherds
4. — Means “God with Us”	D. King David
5. — Who was King of Judea when Jesus was born?	E. Caesar Augustus
6. — He was one of Jesus’ brothers	F. Simeon
7. — Who came to visit Baby Jesus?	G. Gabriel
8. — Who was Jesus descended from?	H. Messiah
9. — To whom did an angel say, “Do not be afraid”?	I. Matthew
10. — Who told Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem?	J. Savior
11. — Who was it revealed to by the Holy Spirit that he wouldn’t die before he saw the Messiah?	K. Emmanuel
12. — Which title of Jesus means “Anointed One”?	L. Micah
13. — Which book in the Bible references the Magi?	M. Jacob
14. — Which prophet called Jesus Prince of Peace?	N. Mary
15. — What does the name Jesus mean?	O. Angel of the Lord
16. — Who prophesied where Messiah would be born?	P. Bethlehem
17. — Who spoke to shepherds in the fields?	Q. King Herod
18. — Which prophet never left the temple and spoke about Jesus to his parents when they took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord?	R. James

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

