

Although we try to make Jesus the reason for the season, this becomes hard as the stress of everything we have to do before Christmas becomes overwhelming. Below and on the next page are excerpts from the article at <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/2016-advent-home-worship> to help us get through the season.

2016 Advent Home Worship

By MaryJane Pierce Norton



Advent is the season when we “get ready” to receive God's gift of Jesus. Here are some ways you can prepare yourself and your family for celebrating Jesus' birth:

- **Make an Advent wreath.** The circle symbolizes God's never-ending love. Green symbolizes life. The four candles represent the four Sundays leading to Christmas. The white candle symbolizes Jesus.
- **Make an Advent prayer chain.** Write a prayer concern on 24 strips of construction paper and make a chain. Each day, open a strip and pray for that day's prayer concern.
- **Make a family-blessing jar.** Place an empty jar on your dining table. Each day during Advent, write one blessing for which you are thankful on a slip of paper and put it in the jar. On Christmas Day, pour out the blessings, read them, and give thanks to God for the blessings you have enjoyed during Advent.
- **Use the Advent Worship Service** (below) to worship individually and with your family daily.

First Week of Advent - Hope

Thursday, December 1, 2016: As we get ready to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, we sometimes get very busy. Today, take a ten-minute break. Sit quietly. If it helps you to concentrate, look at your Advent wreath or Christmas tree. Pray, asking God's help to bring quiet and calm to a busy world.

Friday, December 2, 2016: Think about your family. Some may live with you. Others may be far away. Who in your family needs God's hope? Pray for this family member today.

Saturday, December 3, 2016: There are people in our neighborhoods, in our church, and in our community who need to know of God's hope. Select someone to visit today. Visit electronically or by phone or in person. Go as a family or by yourself. Maybe there is someone you always see at the library. Stop by today and talk with that person. Tell the person you visit one way he or she helps you feel hopeful.

Second Week of Advent - Love

Second Sunday of Advent — December 4, 2016: Join us in church or see the readings and prayers for the lighting of the second candle on the Advent wreath at <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/2016-advent-home-worship>. Read Isaiah 11:1-10. When we think of God's love, we might not always think of the words of the prophets. But when we read this picture of the peaceable kingdom, we are amazed by God's love that allows a child to lead. Who are the people in our world who need the message of God's love? What are our hopes for how people today can receive the message of God's love? How do we help others know God's love?

Monday, December 5, 2016: Read again Isaiah 11:1-10. Create a poster by drawing pictures of the wondrous things you see in the world around you that God has created. Create your picture of God's kingdom of peace. Give thanks for the world and all the people in the world.

Tuesday, December 6, 2016: Is there someone you know who needs to hear words of God's love? Make or select a card for that person and mail it today.

Wednesday, December 7, 2016: Love is something we need in our church. Think about the people in our church. Select one person in our church. Pray for that person today.

Thursday, December 8, 2016: As we get ready to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, we sometimes get very busy. Today, take a ten-minute break. Sit quietly. If it helps you to concentrate, look at your Advent wreath or Christmas tree. Pray, asking God's help to bring quiet and calm to a busy world.

Friday, December 9, 2016: Think about your family. Some may live with you. Others may be far away. Who in your family needs God's love? Pray for this family member today.

Saturday, December 10, 2016: There are people in our neighborhoods, in our church, and in our community who need to know of God's love. Select someone to visit today. Visit electronically or by phone or in person. Go as a family or by yourself. Maybe there is someone who waits on you at the grocery store. Stop by today and talk with that person. Tell the person you visit one way he or she makes you feel loved.

Third Week of Advent — Joy

Sunday, December 11, 2016 — 3rd Sunday of Advent: Join us in church or see the readings and prayers for the lighting of the second candle on the Advent wreath at <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/2016-advent-home-worship>. Read Luke 1:47-55. How privileged we are to have this beautiful song of Mary. Can you imagine her singing the words written in Scripture? It is a testimony to her faith and joy at being chosen as God's servant. Who needs God's joy? How do we help others know that God gives joy?

Monday, December 12, 2016: Today read again Luke 1:47-55. Make a list together of the things that bring joy to your lives. Write your own song of joy to God or sing a song that expresses joy to God.

Tuesday, December 13, 2016: Is there someone you know who needs to hear words of joy? Make or select a card for that person and mail it today.

Wednesday, December 14, 2016: Joy is something we need in our city. Think about different leaders of our city. Select one leader of our city. Pray for that leader today.

Thursday, December 15, 2016: As we get ready to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, we sometimes get very busy. Today, take a ten-minute break. Sit quietly. If it helps you to concentrate, look at your Advent wreath. Pray, asking God's help to bring quiet and calm to a busy world.

Friday, December 16, 2016. Think about your family. Some may live with you. Others may be far away. Who in your family needs God's joy? Pray for this family member today.

Saturday, December 17, 2016: There are people in our neighborhoods, in our church, and in our community who need to know of God's joy. Select someone to visit today. Visit electronically or by phone or in person. Go as a family or by yourself. Maybe there is someone you see in a place where you go to eat. Stop by today and talk with that person. Tell the person you visit one way he or she brings joy to you.

Fourth Week of Advent — Peace

Sunday, December 18, 2016 — 4th Sunday of Advent: Join us in church or see the readings and prayers for the lighting of the fourth candle on the Advent wreath at <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/2016-advent-home-worship>. Read Luke 2:1-20. This Scripture reminds us that when we are fearful, we are often not thinking of peace. The angels calm the shepherds and send them forward with a task. Who are the people in our world who need God's peace? How do we help others know God's desire for peace in our world?

Monday, December 19, 2016: Peace seems so difficult for us to achieve in our world. Read again Luke 2:1-20. Think about what peace would look like in your family, in your congregation, in your community, in our nation, and in the world. Pray a prayer of peace asking God for what you have envisioned.

Tuesday, December 20, 2016: Spend time today thinking about your image of a world at peace. Write your thoughts, or create a picture depicting God's peace in the world.

Wednesday December 21, 2016: Today, try a new greeting to those you see in your home, or at work, or as you shop. Say, "Christmas Peace to you." At the end of the day, when you pray, thank God for each person you saw this day and pray that each person will experience the peace of God.

Thursday, December 22, 2016: As we get ready to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, we sometimes get very busy. Today, take a ten-minute break. Sit quietly. If it helps you to concentrate, look at your Advent wreath or Christmas tree. Pray, asking God's help to bring quiet and calm to a busy world.

Friday, December 23, 2016: Take time to do an act of service today for someone in your home or someone in your community. You might want to make cookies for your mail carrier or take a Christmas card to your neighborhood bank. Perhaps you can call those who work at your church and offer thanks for their service. How does showing we appreciate the service of others bring peace? What acts of peace can you do this day?

Saturday, December 24, 2016 -- Christmas Eve: Light the four candles on your wreath. Read together Matthew 1:18-25. We sometimes forget about Joseph. Are there those in your home or community that you might be forgetting? Pray for the forgotten people in your home, your church, or your community.

Jesus' Birthday

Sunday, December 25, 2016—Christmas Day: Join us in church or see the readings and prayers for the lighting of the second candle on the Advent wreath at <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/2016-advent-home-worship>. Read Matthew 2:1-12. It's amazing to think of these persistent travelers who were determined to find Jesus. They traveled with hope and faith in the promise that they would find the new king. Who are the people in our world who need to know of God's promises? What are our hopes on this Christmas Day for our world? How can we help people remember God's promises after Christmas Day is over? Name one thing you are willing to do in the days following Christmas that will help you and others remember God's promises.



Dear North East District Family,

I'm a Christmas guy. This is my absolute most favorite time of year. I love the magical quality of once again discovering that God loves us so much that, as Eugene Peterson wrote, he "moved into the neighborhood" to be with us. The music, the worship, the gatherings all proclaim the glorious idea of the Incarnation that God came to walk among us, live with us, and die for us. I'm still in awe over that fact.

As we begin this Advent and Christmas season, here are some ideas that you might want to consider within your own faith communities:

1. People are more likely this time of year than just about any other time to be open to an invitation to worship. Be thinking about how you can be intentional with invitations to neighbors, friends, family, and co-workers. The value of hospitality is essential in our Christian witness. Be empowered and equipped to extend that same hospitality.
2. This can also be a difficult time of year for people. It's hard for people who are grieving a lost loved one. It's challenging for people who face addiction issues. It's rough for people whose families have a hard time being together in healthy ways. Be in ministry with hurting people and open yet another doorway into your faith community.
3. People love Christmas music. We only get to hear it this one time of year. We should derive great meaning from it, and appreciate it, too.
4. Invite people to attend the Christmas Eve service and to church, a special outreach or missions event in January to help them to plug-in to your faith community.
5. Don't underestimate the power of having worship on Christmas Day! People will come. Make it warm, casual, and inviting, and people will join you.

I know how busy this time of year is. Please know I'm praying for you. Thank you for serving Jesus and helping everyone to, once again, encounter the amazing message of His birth! God bless you, and Merry Christmas!

All God's love,
Jay Therrell, Superintendent

(Excerpt from the December District Newsletter)

*Be sure to stop by and visit us on December 16, 2016 from 10-12 or 2-4 for our **District Holiday Open House**. We will be sharing Christmas cookies and other snacks with all who visit. We would love to meet you and have some help decorating the tree at the office. This time will be all about fellowship. We hope you can stop by.*



A word from Rev. Barry Andrews, Senior Pastor

How does that Christmas song go? “It’s the most busiest time of the year...” Or something like that.

Life is full down at the church. Obviously, it’s Advent, and that means that we’re in prep mode for Christmas. The choir takes on the extra challenge, and practice, of preparing a cantata, with extra hands from several of our families and a couple of good folks from Swaim Memorial. Perfect practice makes perfect, and we’re hard at it.



The various small groups of the church are planning parties and good works, and all this bolsters a general feeling of good will through warm fellowship. Remember, there are at least two parts to coming to church --- spiritual and social. Without a proper balance the church becomes irrelevant to daily life, or irrelevant to ministry. Even Christmas parties help us strike an appropriate balance.

The hanging of the greens was tonight, and again, in all of the spirit of a holy season, the House of God was made festive and appropriately symbolic of our hope, love, joy, and peace.

Did we mention that 100% of the bills for 2016 have been paid, on time, and some early? Conference apportionments, insurance, and other connectional items are marked “paid in full”, the children’s home goal is nearly met, and, in many ways, our financial health is good.

We’re blessed with the presence of the NOMADS, and they’ve been busy in Jacksonville and at Faith. What a joy it has been for us to make new friends and put this great campus to good use for God’s Kingdom.

The long wait for a new youth director seems to have come to an end. We’re in the final stages of approving an applicant from the Annual Conference’s Young Adult Ministries Department. We’ve heavily involved the UMYF in the process, and they’re excited about a new year of ministry.

So, we say, “Thank you Lord”. We certainly have our congregational challenges, but we have much praise to give. The stewardship committee has distributed pledge cards, to be turned in during December, as a sign of our thanks. There’s worship and service all year, but, most especially during these seasons of Advent and Christmas. Please be mindful that there is no more appropriate celebration than to be in church on Sunday, and be very sure that those around you note your devotion, or lack of the same. Be a clear witness to faith in Christ during the Sundays of December.

Busy, indeed. Blessed, beyond measure; Joyful, deep in our hearts. May the anticipation of Advent and the joy of Christmas fill your life.





In Memory of

Maria Cristina Garrett

December 2, 1988 - November 17, 2016

Obituary

Maria Cristina Garrett, born December 2, 1988, passed on November 17, 2016. A lifetime resident of Jacksonville, Florida, she graduated from Englewood High School in 2007. She was known to all her family and friends as "Cristina." She loved all things Jeff Gordon and pigs, and she always went for the underdog while being the center of attention.

She was a wonderful mother to her daughter, Maria Brenay Mobley, and is survived by her partner in life, Nathaniel Mobley; mother, Maria A. Garrett; father, Thomas Garrett; sister, Nina (Brad) Pickett; nephew, Branton Cole Pickett; and brother, Thomas Manuel Garett. She is also survived by her grandmother, Vivian Arguelles; uncles, Jose (Marci) and Juan-Carlos (Holly) Arguelles; and great-nephew, Aidan.

In lieu of flowers, hug your family and friends and tell them you love them
Please keep the family and friends of Cristina in your prayers!

Cuba News

The congregation of our Sister Church - Martin Perez and everyone in Cuba needs our prayers. Fidel Castro died on November 25th. It is unknown what is in their future. We pray that that they transition into an era of peace and freedom and improved economic conditions.



Missions



During December, we will be accepting donations for **Heifer Project**. Help provide chickens, goats, or sheep to families throughout the world. Mark your donations HEIFER and place in the offering plate.

During December, we are collecting **Sox for City Rescue Mission**. Please place your donations of new, packaged socks in the Christmas Stocking in the back of the church. Thank you for your generosity to those less fortunate.



We have 2 Nomad teams working projects at Faith UMC – 1 in December and 1 in January. Anyone wishing to show appreciation for their time and service by hosting a dinner, please contact Donna Glasner (504-2942) for available dates.

OPPORTUNITY:

A Gift of Music

**33rd Annual Christmas Concert of First United Methodist Church
Friday, December 2, 2016 at 7:30 PM**

Artists: The Handbell Choir of Riverside Park UMC, Vocal Theory Project - Men Ensemble
Christmas Carols with Tony Chance, First United Methodist Church Sanctuary Choir

Admission: Suggested donation of \$5 per person, includes reception after the concert!

How to get there? The Faith bus will take you. We will leave Faith UMC at 6:15 PM.

OPPORTUNITY:

UMW Christmas Brunch

**Saturday, December 3, 2016 at 11:30 AM
Athens Café, in the Dupont Station Shopping Center, at 6271 St Augustine Road**

All women are invited to the UMW Christmas Brunch at where we will enjoy a Greek buffet. Tickets can be purchased from Evalyn Campbell, Susan Davis, Donna Glasner, or Susan Speicher for \$16.00.

OPPORTUNITY:

Christmas Caroling

**Sunday, December 4, 2016 at 12:00 Noon
Taylor Home (across from the church)**

Come and sing your favorite Christmas carols while bringing Christmas joy to others at the same time. All are welcome, regardless of your singing abilities!

OPPORTUNITY:

Holiday Revival

**Theme: "You Must Be Born Again"
December 7, 2016 at 7:00 PM
Alexander Memorial United Methodist Church
11132 Ft. Caroline Road Jacksonville 32225**

OPPORTUNITY:

How Great Our Joy

**A Christmas Cantata by Faith UMC and Swaim UMC
Sunday, December 18, 2016 at 3:00 PM
In the sanctuary of Faith United Methodist Church**

Please come and support our director, Donna Thouin, and the 26 singers performing this wonderful musical about the joy that the Christmas story still brings to us today!



Love Offering

Christmas is our time of year to show how much we appreciate our church staff. Please show your appreciation by placing your love offering for them in the church offering plate or by mailing it to the church office by Sunday, December 18, 2016.



Sunday, December 4th, is Commitment Sunday!

Hopefully most of you have received your pledge form. If not, I will attach forms in English and Spanish to this newsletter and extras will be available at church.

When we join the church, and each time someone else joins, we pledge to uphold the church with our Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service, and Witness. Although your financial commitment to our church is vital for the planning and operation of our church, it is only part of our pledge to our church.

Commitment Sunday gives us the opportunity to pray about what we are doing in our church. The key word is opportunity. God loves a happy, cheerful giver! He wants us to return our tithe and gifts to Him because we love Him and want to give back to Him – not just because it is expected of us.

Please prayerfully consider what you can do in 2017 for God, for our church, and for the ministries we serve. What is God saying to you? Where is He leading you? Are you doing enough? Can you do more?

Then fill out the innermost section of the pledge form and bring it to church on Sunday. Everything you pledge will provide the seeds to allow God's kingdom, this church, and our ministries thrive. You will have the opportunity to plant the seeds of your commitments, to watch them bloom, and to see them miraculously flourish in 2017.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (ESV)

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.



Even the smallest gift given by someone who loves Him will make Jesus happy.



Word Search Puzzle from Luke 2:4-14 (ESV). Find the **bold** words below in the puzzle.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of **Nazareth**, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called **Bethlehem**, because he was of the house and **lineage** of David,⁵ to be registered with **Mary**, his betrothed, who was with child.⁶ And while they were **there**, the time came for her to give **birth**.⁷ And she gave birth to her **firstborn** son and wrapped him in **swaddling** cloths and laid him in a **manger**, because there was no place for them in the **inn**.⁸ And in the same region there were **shepherds** out in the field, keeping watch over their **flock** by night.⁹ And an **angel** of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord **shone** around them, and they were **filled** with great fear.¹⁰ And the angel said to them,

“**Fear** not, for behold, I bring you **good** news of great **joy** that will be for all the **people**.¹¹ For unto you is **born** this day in the city of David a **Savior**, who is **Christ** the Lord.¹² And this will be a **sign** for you: you will find a **baby** wrapped in swaddling **cloths** and lying in a manger.”¹³ And **suddenly** there was with the angel a **multitude** of the heavenly host **praising** God and saying,¹⁴ “**Glory** to God in the **highest**, and on earth **peace** among those with whom he is **pleased!**”

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

The Chrismon tree in our church is more than just a Christmas tree. Its ornaments are Chrismons, a contraction for "Christ monograms", and each one depicts a Christian symbol. These handmade ornaments are white with gold decorations of beads, ribbon, sequins, glitter, etc. The white is the liturgical (or Church) color for Christmas and symbolizes that Jesus was pure and perfect. Gold symbolizes His Majesty and Glory. Below are some of the meanings of the Chrismons on our tree.



The Cross symbolises that Christians believe Jesus Christ died for everyone on a Cross.



The Irish or Celtic Cross is a normal cross with a circle in the middle to symbolise eternity.



The Eastern Cross is used by many Eastern or Orthodox Churches.



The Anchor Cross reminds Christian's that Jesus is the anchor of their faith.



The Fish is one of the oldest Christian symbols. The letters, from the Greek word for fish (ichthus), stand for Jesus (I), Christ (X), God (Q), Son (Y), Savior (S).



The Chi-Rho looks like a 'P' with an 'X' on top of it. These two letters are the first two letters of the Greek word 'Christos' which means Christ.



The Star of David, sometimes called the Star of Creation, is a symbol that Jesus was a Jew and a descendant of King David.



A Five Pointed Star represents the five wounds of Jesus on the cross.



The Nativity Star is the symbol of the Star of Bethlehem the Wise men followed.



An Eight Pointed Star represents baptism and regeneration.



The Crown is the symbol that Jesus is King. It shows that Christians believe Jesus is ruler over heaven and the earth.



The Triquetra is the symbol representing the Christian 'Trinity' of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.



The Dove is the symbol of peace and the Holy Spirit. It is shown pointing down to represent the Holy Spirit that appeared as a Dove when Jesus was baptised.



The Cup or Chalice is a symbol of the Mass, Eucharist or Communion. It also represents God's forgiveness.



The Angel reminds Christians of the angels who told the shepherds about the birth of Jesus. It can also represent the second coming of Jesus, which the Bible says will start with an Angel blowing a trumpet.



Babe / Manger represents Jesus as a baby at Christmas.



The Lamb is a symbol for Jesus who is sometimes called 'The Lamb of God'.



The Butterfly is a symbol for transformation and the immortal soul.

The Faith Flyer



December, 2016

**COMING
SOON!**

- 01/01/2017 10:30 AM New Year's Day Worship Service
- 01/07/2017 ----- Our Youth Ministry Intern arrives!
- 01/13/2017 ----- Youth Lake Junaluska Ski Trip
- 01/28/2017 8:30 AM District Leadership Training --
Activate Conference -- Beach UMC