

# THE MAGNOLIA MESSENGER

Volume 3 Issue 46

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## Special points of interest:

\* *Advent 4 — The Sunday of Love!*

\* Crossword — *Merry Christmas*

\* Announcements — Prayers for Peace and Safety for those in Afghanistan Church events, and more!

\* *“What are the 12 Days of Christmas?”*

*The Poinsettia*

\* Liturgical Colors and Misc.



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Sermon Continued:

*“What are the 12 Days of Christmas?”*

The Poinsettai.

Liturgical Colors and Misc.

## Advent 4 — The Sunday of Love

*Micah 5:2-5a*

**But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
are only a small village among all the people of Judah.**

**Yet a ruler of Israel,**

**whose origins are in the distant past,  
will come from you on my behalf.**

**<sup>3</sup> The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies  
until the woman in labor gives birth.**

**Then at last his fellow countrymen  
will return from exile to their own land.**

**<sup>4</sup> And he will stand to lead his flock with the Lord’s strength,  
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.**

**Then his people will live there undisturbed,  
for he will be highly honored around the world.**

**<sup>5</sup> And he will be the source of peace.**

*(New Living Translation)*

As I walked across the street last night to print the Peace Hall worship bulletins, I was struck by quietness of the night, the coolness of the air, and the gentle glow of lights coming from the square. It made me think about some of the many Christmases I was blessed to celebrate.

What comes to your mind’s eye when you think about Christmases long since past?

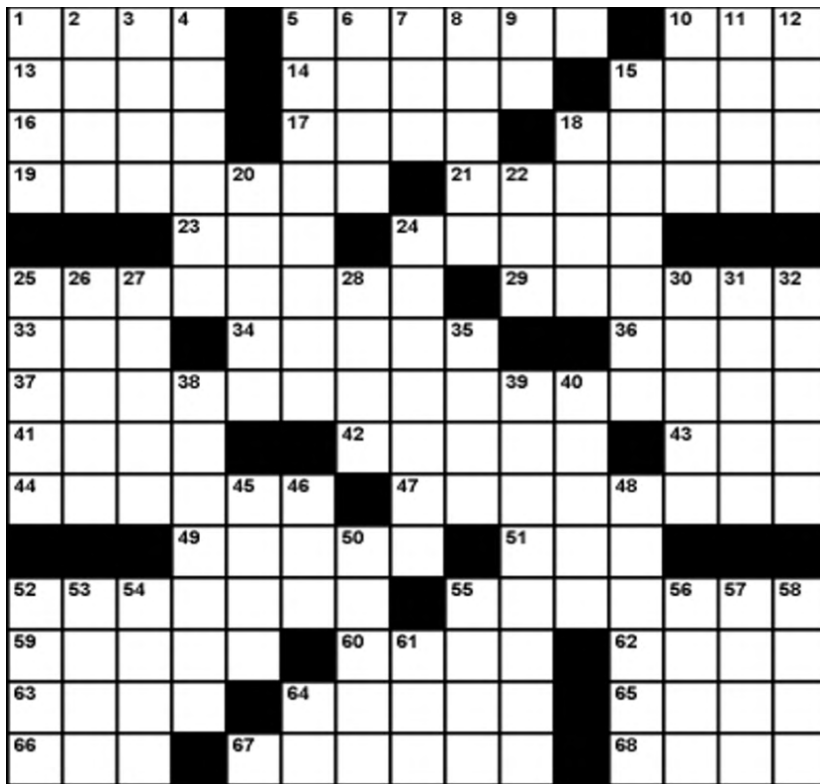
For most of us, we usually only remember the most colorful parts: the parties, the meals, the festive Christmas trees with their lights all-aglow, decorated with ornaments that are reminders of Christmases past and present, and the carefully wrapped presents resting underneath it’s branches. Some of us might even have some recollections of going door-to-door singing cheery Christmas Carols! I remember trudging through the snow with some of my pals from school doing just that with the occasional Christmas Carol recipient giving us cups of hot chocolate to warm our hands and bellies. This was like a bonus part of the Christmas Season for me!

Most of those Christmas hymns and carols remind us of this brightness and joyous spirit, but a few of them bring a definite feeling of holy quietness to our souls. Certainly, Silent Night is one such hymn, but there is another hymn, that was formerly unknown to me, which stirred up a sacred memory from my childhood...

Over 100 years ago, Christina G. Rossetti wrote *“In the Bleak Midwinter,”* the hymn that Sharon played this morning. I have to admit when I first saw that this was our offertory for this morning, I thought what a dreary sounding title for a Christmas Hymn! But the more I thought about the title and the lyrics, the more that it brought me back to a different Christmas experience in my younger days of life in New Jersey...

Whether this moment-in-time for me occurred after a night of Christmas caroling or not, I cannot recall, but I do remember it being later in the evening one of the many

## “Christmas and Winter Holidays” — Crossword Puzzle



### Across

1. \* Twinkly Tree Topper
5. Those who believe in a reasoned existence of God
10. Give a nickname to
13. Money in Malta
14. Type of salad dressing
15. Summer plaything
16. Not for
17. Consequently
18. Exercise result
19. \* Make Merry during the Holidays
21. \* Decorations on Doors
23. Solution for Wounds, minus the "ine"
24. Come into adjustment
25. \* Festive Flyer
29. \* Things like #3D can be found at a what?
33. Alphabet letters
34. Type of Tree
36. Start to "sphere"
37. \* Festive story by Dickens
41. Heard at School: "Is \_\_\_\_

good mark?"

42. Ms. McLachlan of Music
43. Land mass on water, briefly
44. \* Lengthy Lecture
47. \* They are used in celebrations of Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights
49. Scent
51. Bind
52. \* They are used in celebrations for #15D and Hanukkah
55. \* In 1966, he developed the celebration of #15D: Dr. Maulana \_\_\_\_
59. Certain Currency in China (Var. Sp.)
60. Trinket, minus the "ickey"
62. Blood vessel
63. Direct a Helmsman
64. Australian Animal
65. Icicle holder

66. Caustic solution

67. Unique person

68. Hearty dish

### Down

1. Cole Completer
2. Turner of Tunes
3. \* Holiday Handiwork: \_\_\_\_ and Crafts
4. Dried fruit
5. \* Fun toys at Hanukkah
6. British nobleman
7. Verb suffix
8. Facial expression of dislike
9. \* Green and Red Day!: December 25 \_\_\_\_
10. \* Everyone pledges to go on a what after the Holidays?
11. The Beehive State
12. Gambles
15. \* This Holiday means "First Fruits" in the Swahili language. It lasts for seven days (December 26th to January 1st), and it is celebrated by people of African descent to honor family, community and culture.
18. \* Game Name under the Tree
20. Vestment of Vietnam
22. Poke fun
24. \* Heard during the Festive Season: "\_\_\_\_ and Papa coming here, or should we go to their place for the Holidays?"
25. Studies
26. \* Host at a New Year's Eve Party
27. Heard at Work: "\_\_\_\_

boss ever going to learn how to make his own coffee?"

28. Summer hrs. in VA (Pl.)

30. Courtyards

31. Concert Conversation: "Is there \_\_\_\_ pit near the stage?"

32. Buns in a Basket

35. Uncommon

38. \* This ninth month of the Muslim calendar is celebrated by Muslim people who fast during the daylight hours to commemorate the first revelation of the Koran to Muhammad

39. \* It's part of the outfit worn by Rudolph's master

40. \* Music Maker during the Festive Season

45. Plinth

46. Type of Boat, minus the "Ca"

48. "The Matrix" (1999) name

50. Trademark relating to Microcomputers

52. Roman Numerals for 350

53. Said by a Sailor

54. How many lives do Cats have?

55. Low caste

56. Nifty

57. \* People do it during the Festive Season

58. Again, but in a different way

61. Clod

64. Sumerian goddess personifying earth

## December 2021 News and Announcements



Happy December 26th, 2021, the first Sunday of Christmas and the last Sunday of the 2021! We had many great Advent and Christmas celebrations this past month. Here are a few photos from our recent Eastside elementary school canned food drive! Thanks to Ben and Whitteni Lindsey, Eastside

Elementary school, and the many adult and student volunteers who collected and loaded some 8,479 cans! These donors and volunteers have made it possible for the Stewpot to feed hungry souls this Advent and Christmas Season, with many more hot meals to come!



### Crossword Puzzle Solution - "Christmas and Winter Holidays"

1	S	T	A	R		5	D	E	I	S	T	S		10	D	U	B			
13	L	I	R	A		14	R	A	N	C	H		15	K	I	T	E			
16	A	N	T	I		17	E	R	G	O		18	S	W	E	A	T			
19	W	A	S	S		20	A	I	L		21	W	R	E	A	T	H	S		
					23	I	O	D		24	A	L	I	G	N					
25	R	E	I	N	D	E	E	R		29	B	A	Z	A	A	R				
33	E	M	S			34	A	L	D	E	R			36	A	T	M	O		
37	A	C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S	C	A	R	O	L					
41	D	E	E	A				42	S	A	R	A	H		43	I	S	L		
44	S	E	R	M	O	N		47	M	E	N	O	R	A	H	S				
					49	A	R	O	M	A		51	T	I	E					
52	C	A	N	D	L	E	S		55	K	A	R	E	N	G	A				
59	C	H	I	A	O			60	D	O	O	H		62	V	E	I	N		
63	C	O	N	N				64	K	O	A	L	A		65	E	A	V	E	
66	L	Y	E					67	M	I	S	F	I	T		68	S	T	E	W



## Advent 4 — The Sunday of Love

cold nights before Christmas. It was indeed, a bleak midwinter night.

**My memory is crystal clear on the most important details.** The snow had been falling pretty heavily that day and I could see that the street in front of our apartment was blanketed with undisturbed snow. No cars had passed in a while and certainly no one was foolish enough to go out into the street in this cold weather, so there weren't even footprints in the snow or tire tracks in the street. Our Christmas tree was glowing, the room was warm and cozy, so why I wanted to go outside on that cold and snowy night, I don't know, but I wanted to go. So, I bundled up the best I could with my heaviest winter coat, my thickest socks and gloves, and donned my winter boots for my arctic outing.

I can still remember opening the side door that led to our driveway. A small snow drift had developed in front of the door. The wind was lightly blowing and the snow was gently drifting down at this point. The air was bitter cold, but I didn't care. Walking down the driveway of our apartment building, in the quietness of the night, the sound of the snow crunching beneath my feet sounded louder than I had ever heard. As I reached the street, I looked to the left and to the right. As far as I could see, there were no signs of life on the usually busy streets of Rahway, New Jersey. In those days, after 9:00 p.m. almost nothing was open, so most folks just stayed home. A couple of houses in the distance still had their Christmas lights on, but most of the homes were dark. Walking to the middle of the street to better survey the area, I stopped and looked at the beauty of the stars in the sky, heard the gentle sound of the wind, and saw the purity of the undisturbed snow glistening. Even at the age of ten or so, such a sight made me realize that there was so much more to Christmas than Santa Claus and all the presents under the tree in our living room. Though I didn't fully understand it at the time, I believe that God was giving me what I can best describe as a sacred moment in my life.

There was a peace in that moment that I had never experienced before. I couldn't comprehend it, but I knew that there was something very special about that night. It was almost as if God were bringing me closer into His presence for that moment in time. I was impressed with the feeling that there was indeed something much more about celebrating Christmas than I had ever understood before. Christ was in Christmas for me at that very moment and in my heart and in that street, I really celebrated Christmas for the first time!

From the love that my mom had always shown me, to the beauty of that night, and the strangely "magical" feel of the season, I somehow knew that Christmas was about God's love for all of us!

I don't know what the night was like in **Bethlehem Ephrathah** some 2,000 years ago but I suspect the sacredness I felt on the cold streets of Rahway, New Jersey some fifty-plus years ago afforded me a snapshot of that night of what ***"In the Bleak Midwinter"*** was proclaiming in song.

When Sharon played ***"In the Bleak Midwinter"*** as our offertory, we didn't sing the lyrics.

Listen as I read the words of the song that brought this very special memory back to me...

**In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.**

**Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;  
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.  
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.**

**Enough for Him, whom cherubim, worship night and day,  
Breastful of milk, and a mangerful of hay;  
Enough for Him, whom angels fall before,  
The ox and ass and camel which adore.**

## Advent 4 — The Sunday of Love

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,  
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;  
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,  
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

None of us can go back in time to our Christmases past to worship Him as we should, so how can we celebrate Christmas in a way that truly brings glory to Him?

- 1) **Sharing** - We can celebrate a Christmas that brings glory and honor to God by telling others about Christ. In *verse 17 of Luke 2*, we read, “After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child.”
- 2) **Reflecting** - We can celebrate such a Christmas by reflecting on its wonderful meaning. In *verses 18 and 19 of Luke 2*, Luke tells us that everyone who heard about the birth of Christ was astonished, and Mary pondered these things in her heart.
- 3) **Offering Praise** - We can celebrate such a Christmas by offering praise and glory to God. *Luke 2:20* tells us the shepherds glorified and praised God for all that they had seen and heard.

Beyond all of the spending and stress that Christmas has become to many folks, lies the true meaning of Christmas. On a bleak midwinter night, God entered this world in the person of Christ Jesus to give us the most magnificent Christmas gift of all time -- eternal life.

Perhaps this morning or some other Bleak Midwinter's Day before Christmas, you can begin to give Jesus all of your heart and accept Him as your Lord and Savior!

Perhaps this morning or some other *Bleak Midwinter's Day* before Christmas you can begin to give Jesus all of your heart and accept Him as your Lord and Savior!

Merry Chritmas and remember that you have been blessed to be a blessing. So be one!

Pastor Gary



## ***What are the 12 days of Christmas?***

Christmas is not just one day, but a season of twelve days from sunset Christmas Eve (December 24) through Epiphany (January 6). The twelfth day of Christmas, Epiphany, commemorates the visiting of the Christ Child by the Magi (Wise Men) with their gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. Gift giving in some cultures extends throughout the 12 days of Christmas; elsewhere, gift giving is limited to Christmas Eve or Christmas Day or January 5 or 6.

### **Celebrate the season: 12 ideas for the 12 days of Christmas**

To help celebrate the season, here are 12 creative, simple ideas that have nothing to do with partridges or lords-a-leaping.

#### **Have a silent night**

One evening, turn off everything electronic and share Christmas memories. Go through old photos. Watch family movies (you might need to turn on the television for that). Ask others to tell of their favorite family Christmas tradition, and a joy-filled memory of a Christmas past. Spend a few moments talking about the Christmas story and the characters with whom you most relate.

#### **Sing the songs of Christmas**

We sing many Christmas carols without thinking much about the words. Take some time to research the lyrics of songs as you sing them. Where is the author biblically accurate? Where did she or he take poetic license? This is a great way to learn the biblical accounts of the Christmas story and some of the symbolism used.

#### **Don't return—give**

Rather than returning the ugly sweater you'll never wear or the kitchen gadget you'll never use, give it away! Many places and individuals will benefit from those unwanted items. The sweater will keep someone warm, and the gadget will be sold in a secondhand store to generate funds for a ministry.

#### **Pray through your un-decorating**

As you put away the Christmas decorations, consider the symbols of the tree and evergreens, the nativity, the wreath, and more. Pray that those these signs may get packed away for 11 months, the spirit of Christ will continue to be alive in you throughout the year ahead.

#### **Travel by a different route**

The Christmas story contains several journeys—Mary visits Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph travel to be taxed, the Wise Men follow the star to Bethlehem, and Jesus and his family move to Egypt when King Herod orders the slaughter of baby boys. Many of us go on special journeys over Christmas, in addition to the time we spend in the car every day.

Consider traveling by a different route. Maybe that means taking the back way home from work or

## ***What are the 12 days of Christmas?***

stopping by that roadside attraction as you return from Grandmother's house. Let the new journey remind you that we are to follow Jesus wherever he leads.

### **Have mealtime devotions**

Each of the 12 days of Christmas, spend some time during a meal for family reflection. Ask questions. Share concerns. Tell stories. Give thanks. Sense the presence of Jesus among you.

### **Pray for the persecuted**

Those of us privileged to live in places where we are free to pursue our faith sometimes forget there are people in other places whose celebrations of Christmas could come at the cost of their freedom or lives. Read about Christians being persecuted for their faith in places like Syria and Nigeria, a pastor recently imprisoned in North Korea, and others. Then take some special time to pray for them.

### **Record aha moments**

Christmas can be a time of important moments you do not want to forget. A quiet moment with a relative may remind you of the importance of family. A worship service may give you new insight into how to live as a follower of Jesus. A frustrating experience in a store may encourage you to be more patient. Write those insights some place you can return in the weeks and months ahead for a reminder.

### **Plant a tree**

At Christmas, we celebrate the gift of new, eternal life we have received in Christ. The evergreen trees we decorate are a symbol of everlasting life. Planting a tree or caring for the earth in another way can serve as a wonderful reminder of our call to be people who celebrate life.

### **Begin a faithful intention**

Many people make New Year's Resolutions to lose weight or give up an unhealthy habit. Consider a faithful intention this year to help you grow in your spiritual life. Rather than waiting until January 1 to begin, start during the Christmas season.

### **Be a person of peace**

We may not be able to do much to promote world peace, but we have the power to make the world around us more peaceful. Spend the twelve days of Christmas practicing ways you can eliminate harsh words, anger, and other negative attitudes from your life.

\*Joe Iovino works for *UMC.org*



THE MAGNOLIA  
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:15 A.M.  
EXPLORERS SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:15 A.M.  
SANCTUARY WORSHIP 10:15 A.M.

Mailing Address:

Magnolia First United Methodist Church  
320 West Main Street  
Magnolia, Arkansas 71753

**Phone:** 870-234-4530 (Church)

**Pastor:** The Reverend Dr. Gary L. Maskell

**Email:** gary.maskell@arumc.org

**Webpage:** <http://www.magnoliafumc.org/home>

Lectionary Texts for this Week  
December 26, 2021

1st Sunday after Christmas

Lectionary Texts:

*1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26,  
Psalm 148 (UMH 861),  
Colossians 3:12-17,  
Luke 2:41-52*

**Liturgical Color:** **White**

White symbolizes purity, holiness, and virtue, as well as respect and reverence. White is used for all high Holy Days and festival days of the Church Year, especially the seasons of Christmas and Easter, as well as for baptism, marriage, dedications, and in some traditions for the ordination of ministers. In some church traditions it is also used for funerals as a symbol of the

## *The Poinsettia: Jesus' Life Story in a Plant*

**By Crystal Caviness** — 'Tis the season when United Methodist sanctuaries around the world bloom into shades of red created by poinsettias, the most popular Christmas plant. With leaves shaped like the Star of Bethlehem, the poinsettia has been a decorative staple for decades.

While most people associate the poinsettia with Christmas, what may get overlooked is how the poinsettia actually represents not only the birth of Jesus, but also Christ's resurrection.

"I can't imagine not having the poinsettias in the church," said the Rev. Donna Friddle, senior pastor at Sandy Ridge and Northwood United Methodist churches in High Point, North Carolina. "The plants are a visible reminder for us of Christ's birth and His death and the meaning behind those events."

Symbolically, we have Jesus' life story in one plant. The leaves symbolize the star that led the Wise Men to the newborn Jesus, the red leaves are a reminder of the blood of Christ shed during His crucifixion and the white leaves represent Christ's purity.

When it comes to decorating, churches typically place poinsettias around the front of the altar, a location that also has significance.

"As we move forward to the cross, we move through this space that is decorated with poinsettias," says the Rev. Patrick Lewis, senior pastor at Palisade and Fruita United Methodist churches in northwest Colorado.

