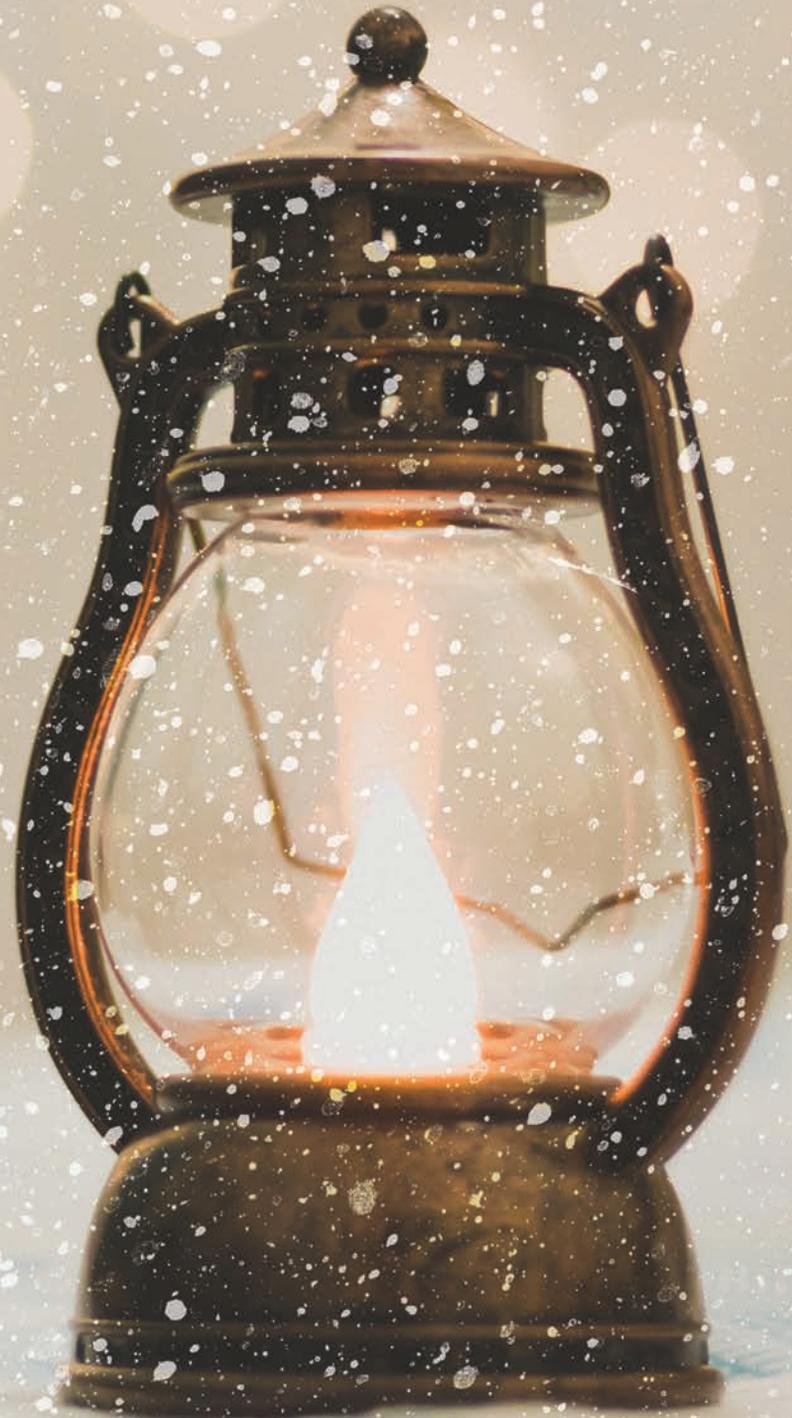


2022 | November | December

HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource



Wonder of His Love



A time for your family to remember and celebrate!

HOMEFRONTMAG.COM

How to Use

- 1** Start by deciding on a day and time that works well for your entire family. It can be an evening around a meal, breakfast on a Saturday, or a break between sporting events. Just commit to “family time” once a week.
- 2** Pick a God’s Word devotional, recipe, and one of the other activities titled Create, Game Time, Worship Response, or Serve. At the end of your time together, speak a blessing over your family members.
- 3** There are four weeks of devotionals and activities. When you have a fifth week in the month, let the kids plan the family night. Remember to HAVE FUN! Family night does not have to be perfect. If you spent time with God and with one another, it was a great family night.

Our Mission

INSPIRE

parents with ideas to create fun, spiritually forming times in the normal rhythm of everyday life.

EQUIP

parents to become the spiritual leaders of God’s truth in their own households.

SUPPORT

families to engage their communities and change the culture around them.



LET’S BE SOCIAL

 [Nlcfam.org](https://nlcfam.org)  [Nlcfamilies](https://www.instagram.com/nlcfamilies)  [NLC Family Min](https://www.facebook.com/NLCFamilyMin)

Discipleship Steps at New Life Church

Parents are the spiritual nurturers of their children’s faith and are the main disciplers in their lives. We are committed to engaging, empowering, and resourcing our parents and families to succeed in their God-given role. Time and resources make this role challenging in our busy world. At New Life Church, we have created a clear path of discipleship for our parents with convenient times and locations. We hope to see you there!

PARENT ORIENTATION A first step toward engaging in our ministry. Hear philosophy, meet staff, and learn how to get involved.

SPIRITUAL PARENTING A six-week class that dives deep into what God’s Word says about parenting.

PARENTING CONVERSATIONS An every-other-month evening for parents to discuss tough topics with other parents and hear from leading experts.

HOMEFRONT MAGAZINE A magazine designed to help you have a successful family night in your home.

FAMILY NIGHT An intergenerational family night as the body of Christ.

PARENT CURRICULUM A weekly or series-based handout that shares biblical information, discussion questions, and activities.



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A NOTE FROM MICHELLE



Michelle Anthony

We live in a hurried world, full of noise and busyness. Sometimes we are fighting to simply “make it through another day.” It is time to look back to our roots ... look back to how God designed the rhythm by which His people would live.

In **Psalm 145:6-7**, David encourages us to remember and celebrate God’s character and His works:

**“They will tell of the power of your awesome works,
and I will proclaim your great deeds.**

**They will celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.”**

God ordained this kind of rhythm because active remembrance cultivates relationship; God wants us to look back and recognize His faithfulness, intense love, and personal interaction with His people individually and as a community. When we teach children to pause and remember, we teach them what it means to honor our relationship with God—that intimate relationship in which we speak and He listens, He speaks and we respond.

Make time this holiday season to create a place for your family to pause and give God praise for all the ways He has been faithful to you and each member of your home.

Dr. Michelle Anthony is the Executive Pastor of Family Ministries at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO. Michelle has graduate degrees in Christian education, theology, and leadership and more than 30 years of church ministry experience as a children’s and family pastor. She is also the author of Spiritual Parenting, The Big God Story, Becoming a Spiritually Healthy Family, and 7 Family Ministry Essentials. Michelle loves a good book and a cup of coffee.

 @TruInspiration

EDITOR’S NOTE



Cristi Thomas

The holidays are my favorite time of year. Hot spiced tea and candles burning. Holiday cards from friends and family make an appearance in my mailbox and I can’t help but smile. I get nostalgic and remember years passed as I ponder all the ways my mom made everything beautiful. We knew it was Christmas when the advent calendar went up on the wall. The anticipation I felt waiting to open a new door on the calendar at the end of each day just added to the wonder of the season.

“Wonder” perfectly describes this time of year. We pause to remember all the gifts and blessings we have been given and look ahead in anticipation and wonder to the celebration of the birth of the savior. As you and your family share special traditions, consider using this issue to help you create moments of celebration and anticipation in your home. **Worship Response** for the month of November is a simple addition to your family table. See how these simple words spark a special time of storytelling. **God’s Word** for December walks you through each week of advent and encourages great conversation about the promised savior and His arrival. And be sure to make some hot cocoa and cozy up together and read,

A Joyful Little Tree in December’s **Storytelling** article.

May you and your family know the deep love of your Heavenly Father. **And may you experience the wonder and joy of Jesus this holiday season.**

Cristi Thomas is the Editor in Chief of HomeFront magazine and Associate Pastor of Family Ministries at New Life Church. She has been a leader in children and family ministries within the local church and parachurch organizations for more than 20 years. Cristi loves music. One of her favorite things is going for a drive, windows down, and singing her favorite songs with all she’s got.

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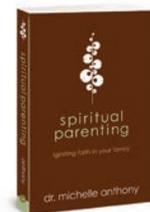
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DID you KNOW

It is our prayer that homes and churches would create environments for children to live in so their faith will grow in a community of common language and practice. To learn more about creating environments that can ignite a transforming faith in your family, we suggest you read:



SPIRITUAL PARENTING:
An Awakening for Today's Families

BY MICHELLE ANTHONY
© 2010 DAVID C. COOK

10 ENVIRONMENTS

The order of the 10 Environments listed coincides with the monthly distribution of this resource.

1 STORYTELLING

“God has a big story, and I can be a part of it!”

The power of The Big God Story impacts our lives by giving us an accurate and awe-inspiring perspective into how God has been moving throughout history. It is the story of redemption, salvation, and hope and tells how I have been grafted into it by grace. It further compels us to see how God is using every person’s life and is creating a unique story that deserves to be told for God’s glory.

2 IDENTITY

“I belong to God, and He loves me!”

This environment highlights who we are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed, and given an inheritance in Christ ... all of which we did nothing to earn. This conviction allows children to stand firm against the destructive counter-identities the world will offer.

3 FAITH COMMUNITY

“God’s family cares for each other and worships God together.”

God designed us to live in community and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity to one another. The faith community serves to create an environment to equip and disciple parents, to celebrate God’s faithfulness, and to bring a richness of worship through tradition and rituals, which offer children an identity. Our love for each other reflects the love we have received from God.

4 SERVING

“Asks the question, ‘What needs to be done?’”

This posture of the heart asks the question, “What needs to be done?” It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate a sensitivity to others and focuses on a cause bigger than one individual life. It helps fulfill the mandate that as Christ-followers we are to view our lives as living sacrifices that we generously give away!

5 OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

“God transforms me when I step out in faith.”

As children and students are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they learn to experience a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires. We believe this environment will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.

6 RESPONSIBILITY

“God has entrusted me with the things and people He created around me.”

This environment captures the ability to take ownership for one’s life, gifts, and resources before God. A child must be challenged to take responsibility for his or her brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as for those who are spiritually lost. Our hope is that the Holy Spirit will use this environment to allow each child to understand that God has entrusted His world to us.

7 COURSE CORRECTION

“When I get off track, God offers me a path of healing.”

This environment flows out of Hebrews 12:11-13 and is the direct opposite of punishment. Instead, biblical discipline for a child encompasses a season of pain, the building up in love, and a vision of a corrected path for the individual with the purpose of healing at its core.

8 LOVE & RESPECT

“God fills me with His love so I can give it away.”

Without love, our faith becomes futile. This environment recognizes that children need an environment of love and respect in order to be free to both receive and give God’s grace. Innate to this environment is the value that children are respected because they embody the image of God. We must speak to them, not at them, and we must commit to an environment where love and acceptance are never withheld due to one’s behavior.

9 KNOWING

“God knows me, and I can know Him.”

Nothing could be more important than knowing and being known by God. We live in a world that denies absolute truth, and yet God’s Word offers just that. As we create an environment that upholds and displays God’s truth, we give children a foundation based on knowing God, knowing His Word, and a relationship with Him through Christ. God is holy, mighty, and awesome, and yet He has chosen to make Himself known to us!

10 MODELING

“I see Christ in others, and they can see Him in me.”

Biblical content needs a practical living expression in order for it to be spiritually impacting. This environment serves as a hands-on example of what it means for children to put their faith into action. Modeling puts flesh on faith and reminds us that others are watching to see if we live what we believe.

FAMILY VERSE

Oh give
thanks
to the LORD,
for He is good;
for His love endures
forever!

1 Chronicles 16:34

Memorizing Scripture can be an incredible practice to engage in as a family. But words in and of themselves will not necessarily transform us; it is God's Spirit in these words who transforms. We come to know God more when we're willing to open our hearts and listen to His Holy Spirit through the words we memorize. Have fun with this verse and think of creative ways to invite your family to be open to God as they commit the verse to memory.

Consider purchasing an 8" x 10" frame to hold your family memory verse each month!



Bless With Your Words

A BLESSING IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK OVER ANOTHER WORDS OF LIFE, HOPE AND TRUTH. PARENTS, TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY EITHER AT THE BEGINNING OR END OF THE DAY TO SIT YOUR CHILD DOWN, LOOK THEM IN THE EYES, AND SPEAK THESE BLESSINGS OVER THEM AS A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE FOR THEIR LIFE.

WEEK ONE

(Child's name), may you know the Father's everlasting love for you. May you know how wide and long and high and deep is the Father's love for you. His is a love that is never-ending and never changes. May you know that you are God's precious child. He created you, and He loves you more than you can ever imagine. May you find your identity as His child, and throughout your life remember and celebrate His goodness to you. (Romans 5:8, Ephesians 3:17, Lamentations 3:22-23, Psalm 118:1-2)

WEEK TWO

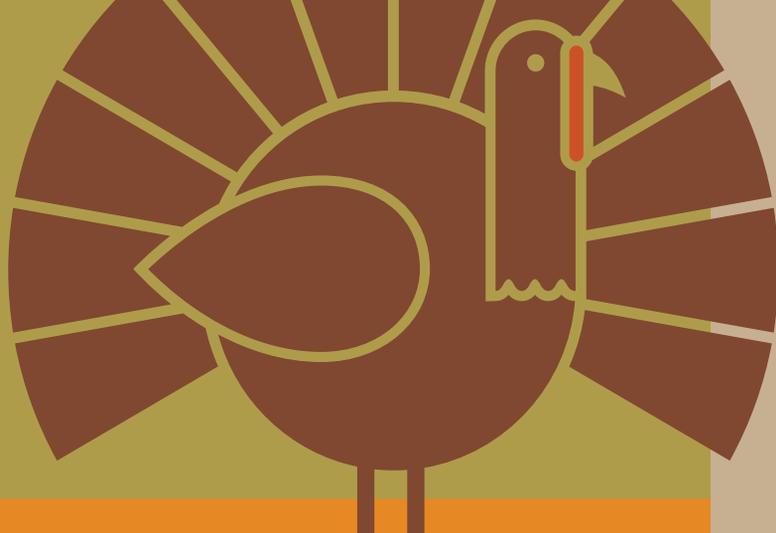
(Child's name), may you walk in wisdom. May you find friendships where you are an encourager, and are encouraged in return. May those friends remind you of God's goodness, may they be wise friends that help you walk down life-giving paths. I pray you celebrate God's goodness together. May you walk in favor of both God and man. As you journey through your days may your life show the fruit of the Spirit, (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.) (Proverbs 13:20, Galatians 5:22-23)

WEEK THREE

(Child's name), may you trust in God with all your heart. May you remember to listen to God's voice and ask Him to show you His ways. May you learn to surrender to God's ways in all you do and everywhere you go, knowing that He will keep you on the right track. May you remember that God's plans for you are good and that He has a wonderful future for you. (Proverbs 3:5-6, Jeremiah 29:11)

WEEK FOUR

(Child's name), may you remember and celebrate God's goodness to you. In your words and in everything you do, may you give thanks to God and live your life in a way that gives Him praise. May you find that your every need is taken care of by God and that He surprises you with even greater things than you could ever ask or imagine. May you serve God faithfully with all your heart and remember what great things He has done for you. (Philippians 4:19, Ephesians 3:20, 1 Samuel 12:24)



God's Word

WEEK ONE:

God Statement: God Is Faithful

Scripture: Leviticus 23:33-44

READ LEVITICUS 23:33–44

Consider reading these passages in *The Message* as a family-friendly paraphrase (biblegateway.com).

The Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths) is a weeklong festival celebrating how God saved the Israelites from Egypt. It's time to commemorate the 40-year journey they took in the wilderness. This was at the end of the fall harvest and after The Day of Atonement. In this passage, God lays out how the people are to remember and celebrate what He did. Throughout the Bible, we see this theme of remembering and celebrating what God has done. This isn't just a Sabbath; it is an intentional time out of routine focused on who God is and what He has done. It is a time to anticipate the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Israel's life, and ours, rests on the redemption and forgiveness of sins through Jesus.

DISCUSSION

- Is remembering and celebrating what God has done in this way familiar to you?
- Why is it important to remember and celebrate what God has done for us?
- How can you remember and celebrate the season you just came out of?

CLOSE YOUR TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER.

Father in heaven, thank you for caring so deeply about us and our daily lives. We thank you for the work you have done, are doing, and will do. Will you help us pause and look back at the seasons you have brought us out of and show us your faithfulness and goodness? We love you and honor you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WEEK TWO:

God Statement: God Is Savior

Scripture: Joshua 4 (focus 4:6-7)

AS A FAMILY READ JOSHUA 4

Consider reading from *The Message* as a family-friendly paraphrase.

A memorial is usually a structure built to remind people of a person or event. In Joshua 4, it states that these stones are still there to this day, although we are unsure of when that was. We know the memorial stood as a sign for many people for many generations. In the passage, the Lord has 12 men, one from each of the tribes of Israel, take a stone to build the memorial. It is significant that He had a representative of all the tribes do this. God didn't have Joshua do it for all of Israel, but he had someone from every tribe do it. Building a memorial and telling our stories are ways that we can remember and celebrate what God has done and is doing.

DISCUSSION

- Have you ever visited a memorial? What was that experience like?
- Why is it important to share stories with each other?
- Why is it important for us to place our own "stone" and not just use someone else's?

CLOSE YOUR TIME PRAYING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY.

Lord, you are so good and so faithful to us. We take this time to reflect on what you have done for us—your people. Thank you for saving us and redeeming us. Help us share stories of who you are and all you have done with those around us and the generations to come. Be honored and glorified in and through us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WEEK THREE:

God Statement: God Is Trustworthy

Scripture: 1 Samuel 7 (focus 7:12)

**AS A FAMILY, READ 1 SAMUEL 7
FOCUSING ON VERSE 7:12**

All throughout the Old Testament, we see moments where God intervened on behalf of the Israelites.

Oftentimes, God instructed the Israelites to build a memorial so they would not forget the things God had done. God understands we are prone to forgetfulness. Remembering God's faithfulness can often be the key to restoring hope and life in discouraging circumstances.

DISCUSSION

- Why do you think it is significant that Samuel took a stone and set it up at Mizpah and Shen? Why was it important for the people of Israel?
- Why do you think it is difficult at times for us to remember the things God has done for us in our lives?
- Take a moment and acknowledge something the Lord has done in your family in the past year. What is a practical way you can make a symbol of remembrance in your home so that you do not forget what God did for your family?

CLOSE YOUR TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the wonderful things You have done. Would You help us be a family that remembers the great things You have accomplished on our behalf? Keep us from forgetfulness and, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, teach us to be a family who trusts in You. Amen.

WEEK FOUR:

God Statement: God Is Faithful

Scripture: Mark 14:12-26

AS A FAMILY, READ MARK 14:12–26

Communion is one of the most precious sacraments the church practices today. This practice specifically returns us to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The bread and the cup remind us that our relationship with God is not rooted in our performance or religion but in the finished work of Jesus Christ. When we do this, we are reminded of God's faithfulness and our hope in the gospel is restored.

DISCUSSION

- Why is it significant that Jesus had His body broken and His blood shed for us? What does it mean for His followers?
- When we take communion, what do you believe is especially important to remember about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?
- Take a moment as a family and go around the table giving thanks to Jesus for what He has done for you through His sacrifice on the cross.

CLOSE YOUR TIME PRAYING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for everything You have given us through Your son, Jesus Christ. We thank You that His body was broken for us and that His blood was shed for us so that we might have a perfect relationship with You. Holy Spirit, help us be grateful and not forget Your marvelous works. Amen.

THERE'S
always
SOMETHING TO BE
THANKFUL
for



Creamy, Crunchy, Sweet, and Salty Pasta Salad

This pasta salad is filled with something for everyone. The salad is creamy and crunchy as well as sweet and salty. The great part about this recipe is that kids can choose their favorite ingredients and add them to the salad. Older children can help cut the grapes, mix the dressing, and toss the salad.

Play a game while making this salad—see if your children can identify what makes the salad creamy? Crunchy? Sweet? Salty?

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 chicken breasts, cooked and shredded
- 8 ounces (1/2 pound) bowtie pasta
- 8 ounces (1/2 pound) spiral pasta
- 1 small can of pineapple tidbits, drained (8 ounces)
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 2 green onions, sliced
- 1/2 of a 5-ounce package of dried cranberries
- 1/2 of 8.5 ounces can of cashews
- 1/2 cup red grapes, halved
- 1 small can of mandarin oranges, drained (11 ounces)
- 1/2 cup coleslaw dressing
- 3/4 cup mayonnaise

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Boil the chicken and let it cool. Shred into small pieces.
2. Cook the pasta according to the package directions. Drain and rinse under cold water.
3. In a small bowl, combine the coleslaw dressing and mayonnaise.
4. Combine the remaining ingredients in a large bowl.
5. Pour the dressing over the top and mix.
6. Refrigerate for at least 1/2 hour.



Orange You Wild About Sweet Potatoes?

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 4 large sweet potatoes (about 4 pounds), peeled and cut into chunks
- 1/2 cup milk
- 4 Tbsp butter
- 4 large oranges
- 1/4 cup orange juice (from the oranges)
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 bag (16 ounces) large marshmallows
- pecan halves

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Place sweet potatoes in a medium-sized pot. Cover with cold water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer until fork-tender, about 20 to 25 minutes. Drain.
3. In a small saucepan, heat milk and butter until warm but not boiling.
4. While the milk is heating, cut a thin slice from the top and bottom of each orange to make flat surfaces. Cut oranges in half. Squeeze and save the juice. Then scoop out the pulp. Set orange cups aside.
5. Return the potatoes to the pot and add warm milk mixture, orange juice, sugar, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Using a handheld mixer, whip until creamy. Add more milk if necessary.
6. Place orange cups on two baking sheets. Divide sweet potato mixture equally among cups. Top each with a marshmallow and two pecan halves.
7. Bake until beginning to brown, about 30 minutes.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 10-12 wide-mouthed mason jars (8-ounce)

GRAHAM CRACKER CRUST LAYER

- 1 1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs
- 3 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 4 Tbsp butter, melted and slightly cooled

WHIPPED CREAM CHEESE LAYER

- 2 cups heavy whipping cream
- 1 1/2 cups sifted powdered sugar
- 8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 2 tsp pure vanilla extract

PUMPKIN LAYER

- 1 cup milk
- 1 15-ounce can pumpkin puree (not pre-spiced pumpkin pie filling)
- 2 packages (4-serving size) Jell-O vanilla flavor instant pudding and pie filling
- 1 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ginger
- 1/8 tsp cloves

WHAT YOU'LL DO

FOR GRAHAM CRACKER CRUST LAYER

Preheat oven to 350° F. Stir together the graham cracker crumbs, sugar, and cinnamon. Then add the melted butter and stir until evenly moistened. Spread mixture in a 9" x 13" pan and bake for 5 minutes. Stir and bake for another minute or two, or until crumbs are fragrant and nicely browned. Remove from oven and let cool completely while you prepare the other pie layers.

FOR WHIPPED CREAM CHEESE LAYER

Whip the cream until stiff. Add the powdered sugar and beat just to combine. Remove sweetened whipped cream to another bowl and set it in the refrigerator. Add the cream cheese to the same bowl and cream until very smooth, about 1 to 2 minutes. Blend in the vanilla. Now add half of the sweetened whipped cream back into the bowl with the cream cheese, gently folding to thoroughly combine. Place this mixture in the refrigerator to stay chilled.

FOR PUMPKIN LAYER

Pour the milk into a large bowl. Add the pumpkin, pudding mixes, and spices. Beat with a wire whisk for 2 minutes until very well blended. The mixture should be quite thick.

ADD THE LAYERS INTO THE JARS— THIS IS WHERE YOUR KIDS CAN GET INVOLVED!

1. Spoon approximately 2 Tbsps of the whipped cream cheese into the bottom of the jar. Be careful to avoid getting it on the sides of the jar. Lightly tap the jar on a towel (so it doesn't break) on the counter, to settle the mixture. Repeat this step with the rest of the jars.
2. Sprinkle the whipped cream cheese layer with 2 Tbsps of baked graham cracker crumbs. Lightly tap the jar again to even out the crumbs. Repeat with the rest of the jars.
3. Spoon approximately 2 Tbsps of the pumpkin pudding mixture on top of the graham cracker crumbs. Lightly tap again and repeat with the rest of the jars.
4. Now you can simply add a dollop of the reserved sweetened whipped cream (without the added cream cheese) to the top of each pie with a spoon. Finish with a sprinkling of graham cracker crust.
5. Refrigerate and enjoy!



Thanksgiving Again Pie

Each year on the day after Thanksgiving, my sisters and I join mom in the kitchen to make “Thanksgiving Again Pie.” Now, I know it’s a good use of leftovers, but part of me secretly thinks it’s another way for mom to get us all in the kitchen to extend our time together just a little more before the weekend is over. So, I’d like to share this fun and simple tradition with you and your family.

Gather the kids because this is DEFINITELY something they can do.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- Wooden spoons (1 per child)
- 2-3 prebaked pie crusts
- Thanksgiving Day leftovers: turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, cranberries, veggies (green beans, greens, carrots, etc.) gravy
- Foil

WHAT YOU’LL DO

1. Preheat the oven to 350°.
2. Create space at the kitchen counter or table for kids to assemble the pies. Consider putting each food item in a container in the center of the table.
3. Begin to create layers in each pie crust. My family starts with turkey and then adds cranberries, stuffing, veggies, and ends with mashed potatoes. You can layer in any order you like.
4. Allow your kids to create the layers. As they do ask, “What was your favorite part of Thanksgiving?” “What is one way we can make a habit of showing our gratitude to God and others throughout the year and not just Thanksgiving?”
5. Once the pies have been filled, place them in the oven for 20-25 minutes—just enough to heat through. Cover with foil as needed.
6. Heat any leftover gravy to pour over the top once served.

*By Cristi Thomas (and her mom, Jana Flores-Thomas),
Associate Pastor of Family Ministries, NLC North*

River of REMEMBRANCE



The Feasts and Festivals were an intentional time that helped to create rhythms for the ancient Israelites to remember the faithfulness of God and celebrate with each other. As humans, we are forgetful creatures, and from the stories we find in Scripture, we always have been. Creating rhythms of remembrance is helpful in reminding ourselves about the truth of who God is and what that means for us as His children. **But we must choose to be intentional to take time, use resources, and encourage one another in this remembrance.**

In Joshua 4 the Israelites took stones from the Jordan River to set up a visual reminder of how God delivered them. This creative response will help lead you through creating a similar visual reminder of God's faithfulness in your life.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Small rocks - no bigger than the size of your palm
- Hot glue
- Paper
- Blue Markers to represent a river
- Sharpie

WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Draw a simple river path down the middle of the paper.
- As a family, gather around the table and answer the question below. These answers can then be written down inside the river to symbolize the hardships that each of you has encountered:
- What is one thing that has been the hardest for you this year?
- For kids, this may be fear, going to a new school, making new friends, etc.

- Now, give each member of the family a stone and a sharpie. Have everyone answer this question and write the answer on their rock.
- What is one way God has shown Himself to you this year?
- Try to attach a God Statement to this, like: God Redeems, God is Kind, God Saves, God is Healer, etc.
- When everyone has shared their answer, begin stacking the rocks on top of each other on the river, hot gluing them together. Keep this creative response in a spot that everyone will be able to see and be reminded of how God has shown Himself in your family.

by Shayleen Smith, Family Ministries Director, NLC East

Going on a Turkey Hunt and Giving Thanks Alphabet Game

The season of all things harvest has arrived. One way to enjoy the earlier sunsets and shorter days can be gathering your family around the table for some indoor family fun! Below are some creative games to Remember & Celebrate the blessings of our good, good Father God.

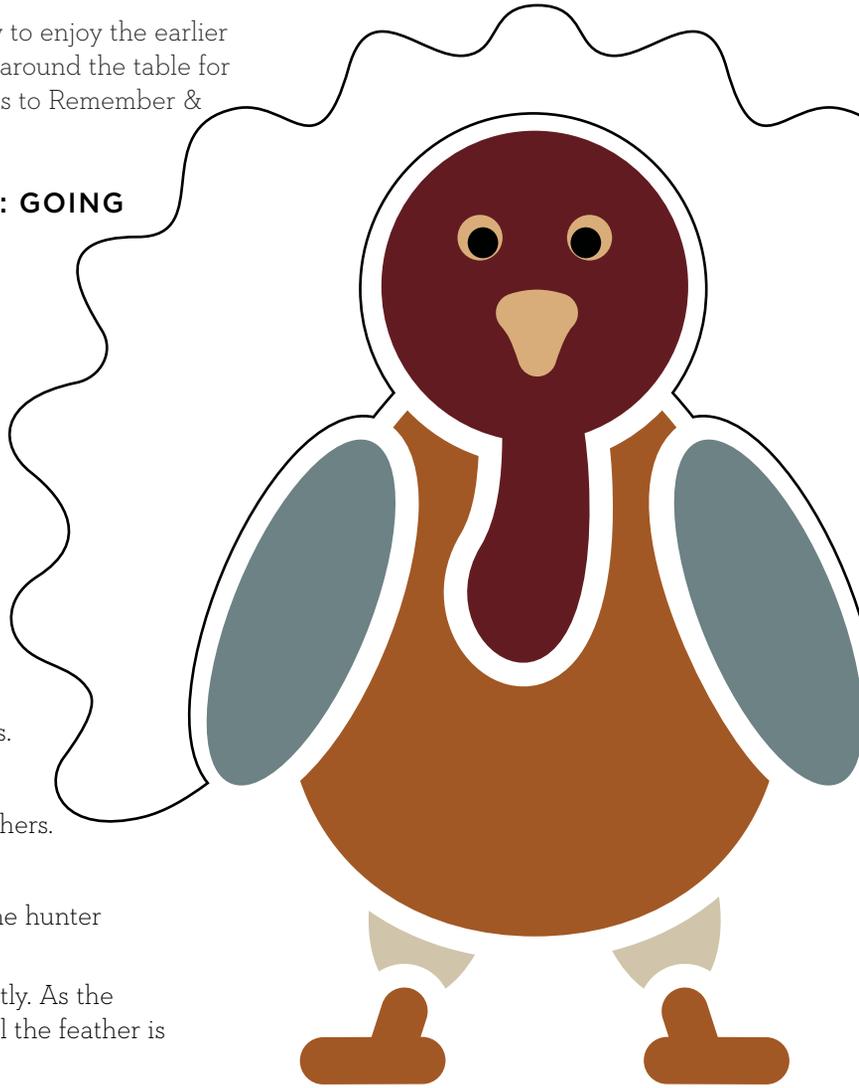
GAME OPTION #1 (FOR YOUNGER KIDS): GOING ON A TURKEY HUNT

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- An outline drawing of a turkey
- Tape
- Feather outline for each person
- Crayons or markers

GAME INSTRUCTIONS

1. Give each person a feather image to color and cut out.
2. Gather the feathers into a pile.
3. One player is a hunter, and the others are guides.
4. The hunter leaves the room.
5. The guides choose a spot to hide one of the feathers.
6. The hunter returns to find the feather.
7. Instead of saying "hot or cold" the guides help the hunter by "gobbling" like turkeys.
8. If the hunter is not close, the guides gobble quietly. As the hunter gets closer, the guides gobble louder until the feather is found.
9. The hunter then tapes the feather on the turkey outline.
10. Repeat until everyone has had a turn or until the turkey has enough feathers.
11. Finish the game by asking each person to share one thing that they are thankful for and writing it on one of the turkey's feathers.



GAME OPTION #2: GIVING THANKS ALPHABET GAME

No preparation is needed to play, just a comfy space for everyone to gather in a circle together.

GAME INSTRUCTIONS

Starting with the letter "A" the first person gives thanks for something that begins with "A". Continue giving thanks, in alphabetical order as you go around the circle in. As each person takes their turn, they must remember what has already been said, repeating in A,B,C order and then adding their own with the next letter. If someone gets stuck, help them out by having the person with that letter say it again and so on around the circle.

A PLACE at the *Table*

Thanksgiving is filled with warm and cozy memories for many of us. This last year was especially significant. As I walked through the front door of my friend's home I was immediately met with laughter, hugs, and the familiar scents of the holiday. But it wasn't the great company, food, or atmosphere that made the day so memorable. At each place setting was a card with a beautifully written word. The instructions were simple, "sit in the seat with the word that you identify with the most." Daughter, redeemed, loved, cherished, adopted, father, forgiven, and hopeful were some of the words represented on the tables. Each person thoughtfully selected their word and sat down.

There came a point in the evening when my friend asked everyone to share the reason they had selected their word. Each person listened intently to every story shared. For some, it took a moment to process why they had been drawn to the word. Others had their story ready to go. ALL were beautiful and moving. During this time, we were able to pause as we remembered with our loved ones what God had done and we truly celebrated together.

This year, as you prepare to gather around your Thanksgiving table, I would encourage you to do this very thing. I am confident that you will be overwhelmed by the goodness of God as seen in the lives of those you love. **Even in the HARDEST of stories, we were all (even the storyteller) able to see God at work and call Him Faithful and Good.**



WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Small blank cards
- Pen
- Ideas for words: redeemed, loved, forgiven, hopeful, grateful, adopted, chosen, strong, father, mother, daughter, son, grandparent, expectant, persevering, joyful

WHAT YOU'LL DO:

Write one word on each card. Place the cards at each place setting around your holiday table. Share the directions with everyone, "choose the word with which you most identify." Then, encourage each person to share the reason they chose the word they did. Listen and celebrate the ways you see God at work in them.

by Cristi Thomas, Associate Pastor of Family Ministries, NLC North

A NEW FAMILY AT *Thanksgiving*

As Liliana packed her newest pair of winter gloves, she felt a bit nervous about her family's fall break plans. She could hear her dad calling her and her new brother, Wyatt, from outside: "Bring me your bags—we need to get on the road in five minutes!" Her dad wanted to get on the road early to beat the holiday traffic. Liliana was dragging, not because it was early, but because she wasn't too excited to meet her new grandparents. Liliana's dad had recently gotten remarried—to Wyatt's mom. Now she was part of a blended family. This year, Liliana really wanted to spend Thanksgiving with her real mom, but her dad had planned this trip so that she could meet her new stepmom's family.

Hours passed as Liliana and Wyatt snacked and played road trip games in the back seat. They had both just dozed off when Liliana's stepmom gently shook them awake. They had arrived. Although Liliana and Wyatt got along really well, she wondered what this new family would be like. Would they like her? Would she like them?

Dad gave Wyatt and Liliana their bags to take inside. Upon entering the house, Liliana could smell all the aromas of a Thanksgiving dinner—turkey roasting in the oven, gravy simmering on the stove, and pumpkin pie cooling on the counter. These familiar scents made her feel more at ease. Wyatt's Grandma and Grandpa ran to Wyatt and his mom and embraced them in a giant bear hug. They did not hesitate to pull Liliana into the group bear hug. She did not expect to feel so welcomed and a part of this family so quickly.

Before Thanksgiving dinner was served, Liliana's new grandpa opened a Bible. She had not seen a Bible in a while. He said he loved celebrating Thanksgiving. It reminded him of the times and ways God had told His people to remember and celebrate Him. Her new grandpa read from a book in the Bible called Leviticus. She thought Leviticus was a very unusual title. Grandpa read about a special feast that God's people celebrated (and still celebrate) each year. The Israelites would construct a makeshift tent to remember how God had freed them from slavery in Egypt. During this feast, they would celebrate God's salvation, provision, and shelter. Liliana's new grandpa said he was glad he could remember and celebrate those same things about God every day and especially at Thanksgiving.

That night, Liliana thought about the day as she laid her head on the pillow and pulled the covers up. She wondered about this God who saved and provided. She whispered a prayer to thank God for this new family and for her mom back home. Liliana wanted to hear more stories from the Bible—or as Grandpa called it, The Big God Story—and even read it for herself. Falling asleep, she murmured, "I like my new family. This turned out to be one of the best Thanksgivings ever."

by Laurie Bennett, Kids Director, NLC North





For to us a
child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government
will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting
Father,
Prince of Peace.



Isaiah 9:6



BLESS WITH YOUR WORDS

A BLESSING IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK OVER ANOTHER WORDS OF LIFE, HOPE AND TRUTH. PARENTS, TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY EITHER AT THE BEGINNING OR END OF THE DAY TO SIT YOUR CHILD DOWN, LOOK THEM IN THE EYES, AND SPEAK THESE BLESSINGS OVER THEM AS A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE FOR THEIR LIFE.

Week One: HOPE

ISAIAH 7:14; ISAIAH 9:6-7

(Child's name), may you know that Jesus is your hope, and He loves you. May you look with hopeful anticipation each day of experiencing God's goodness because He is in control of your life. He will guide you and give you strength. Jesus, who is Immanuel, is always with you.

Week Two: FAITH

LUKE 1:26-35

(Child's name), may you know that God's favor rests on you. He dearly loves you. God is faithful to keep His promises. You can put your faith and trust in the One who holds everything together. May you remember that nothing is impossible with God.

Week Three: JOY

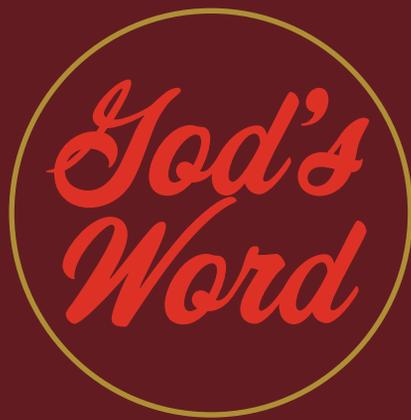
LUKE 2:1-12; ISAIAH 52:7

(Child's name), may you be filled with joy knowing that Jesus is the good news! Jesus came to save you because He loves you. May you share the good news of joy and salvation with all you meet.

Week Four: PEACE

EPHESIANS 2:14; ROMANS 5:1; LUKE 2:14

(Child's name), may you know that Jesus is your peace. He came to break down the wall that separated you from God. You have been made right with God through your faith in Jesus. May you know that you have God's peace because you are His child.



Week One

GOD STATEMENT:

Jesus Is Hope

SCRIPTURE:

Isaiah 9:6-7

December is often busy and noisy, yet full of wonderful things. As we enter the season of advent, I encourage you to set the pace for your children. By being intentional with your eyes and nose, life can slow down during this fast-paced season. May this Christmas season with your family be marked by peace. Pause often and allow your heart and your family to reflect on the words the prophet Isaiah gave us to inspire hope and expectation for the greatest hope given to us.

READ ISAIAH 9:6-7 TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

DISCUSSION

- What are two or three things you look forward to during the Christmas season?
- Which of the four names that described the child yet to be born gives you the greatest sense of hope?
- How might the coming of Jesus inspire hope for us today?

CLOSE YOUR TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER

God, teach us to slow down and remember that we have been given the greatest gift in Your son. We thank You that, forever and always, You are the Wonderful Counselor, our Mighty God, our Everlasting Father, and our Prince of Peace. Remind us of the hope we have in Jesus and show us how we can encourage others with that same hope. Amen.

by Victor Mendoza, Student Ministries Worship Pastor, NLC North

Week Two

GOD STATEMENT:

Jesus Inspires Faith

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 1:30-33

READ LUKE 1:30-33 TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Jesus came not only to redeem us but to reign over us. The beautiful thing about advent is that our Savior came humbly as a baby with the promise that He would one day rule over all. Our Messiah has conquered death, sickness, and every other force of darkness and will come again one day to make all things right. The reign of King Jesus gives us joy for the present and hope for the future. Jesus inspires our faith!

DISCUSSION:

- How does the reign of Jesus differ from the rulers we see today?
- How does the kingship of Jesus give us hope and peace?
- What gets in the way of us remembering that Jesus is King and is in control?

CLOSE YOUR TIME IN PRAYER

Jesus, you are King! You are the King of our family, the King of our city, and the King of our world. Teach us to never forget that You reign over everything. Show us how to be carriers of Your kingdom everywhere we go. Amen.



Faith



Week Three

GOD STATEMENT:

Jesus Is Joy

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 2:1-12

READ LUKE 2:1-12 TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

This week we are reading **Luke 2:1-12**, which tells about when the shepherds encountered an angel and heard about **Jesus's birth**. As you read through the text as a family, I would encourage you to pay attention to Jesus' humble beginnings, the humility of the shepherds, and their joyful response to the Good News. It is an excellent example of how we can receive the gospel in our hearts.

DISCUSSION

- Joseph and Mary had to make an inconvenient and difficult journey to Bethlehem before Jesus was born. As a result, our savior was born in surprising and humble circumstances. Share a time when God showed up during an unforeseen circumstance in your life to do something miraculous.
- The shepherds were going about their day-to-day life when they encountered the angel. Some people call that a divine interruption! Describe a time when you felt interrupted by God with an encouraging revelation or good news.
- The angel told the shepherds the good news will cause great joy for all the people. How do you feel knowing this joy includes you?

CLOSE YOUR TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER

God, thank you for the good news of Jesus Christ who is our cause for great joy. Thank you for the light of Jesus that shines in the midst of our everyday lives and stressful circumstances. Please help us experience the joy of salvation that Jesus brings. Amen.

Week Four

GOD STATEMENT:

Jesus Is Peace

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 2:13-15

FOR THE CHRISTMAS DAY ADVENT READING AND MORE, VISIT HOMEFRONTMAG.COM TO DOWNLOAD YOUR CHRISTMAS DAY FAMILY RESOURCE.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1

TOGETHER AS A FAMILY READ LUKE 2:13-15

Jesus came to reconcile us, bringing peace between God and humankind. Take a moment to ask your family to define peace. Then discuss the questions below.

DISCUSSION

- What comes to mind when you think about the peace we have because of Jesus? How does this affect your heart and mind?
- What do you think of when you think about the favor of God?
- The shepherds heard the good news and went to see Jesus. How did you respond when you heard the good news about Jesus for the first time?

CLOSE THIS TIME TOGETHER IN PRAYER

God, thank you for giving us peace through Jesus. Help us respond to you and see the good you are doing and the peace you bring to our lives and the lives of those around us. Amen.



SWEET TREAT NATIVITY

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- graham crackers
- chocolate frosting
- mini chocolate candy bars
- mini-Tootsie Roll® candies
- mini candy canes
- large marshmallows
- small marshmallows (or cut one large)
- gumdrops (various colors)
- fruit wedge gummy candies
- black licorice (small pieces)
- fruit leather
- toothpicks
- flaked coconut
- yellow food coloring
- resealable plastic bag
- frosting decorator tips
- wax paper or parchment paper



WHAT YOU'LL DO

STEP 1: STABLE

1. Lay parchment paper flat to create a display base.
2. Place 2 graham crackers next to each other and frost the outer edges.
3. Place another graham cracker along the back and lean two more graham crackers against the corners of the back for added support.
4. Frost the tops of the left and right sides and place another graham cracker piece across the top to create the roof.

While creating the stable, **ask your kids**, “What is a stable? Do you think this was a good place for the Son of God to be born? Jesus came to earth as a humble King unlike any other.”

STEP 2: HAY

Sprinkle the coconut on the floor of the stable. You may choose to tint it with a few drops of yellow food coloring. Place food coloring in a bag with the coconut and mix it up.

Ask your kids, “Do you think the hay felt soft or scratchy for baby Jesus to lie upon? The Bible tells us, He was wrapped in large strips of cloth first, so the hay made a nice cushion in the manger.”

STEP 3: MANGER

To create a manger, use half of a graham cracker for the base and one-fourth of a cracker for each side. Squeeze a generous amount of frosting down the center of the base square and stick the two smaller crackers into the frosting in a “V” shape. Sprinkle the manger with hay.

Ask your kids, “Managers are typically used for feeding the animals in a stable. What might be some reasons that Mary and Joseph put baby Jesus in a manger?”

STEP 4: BABY JESUS

To make the baby, cut off the tip of a small orange gumdrop and attach it to the top of a small marshmallow. Place baby Jesus in the manger.

STEP FIVE: ANIMALS

To make a sheep, you'll use one large marshmallow for the body and five small pieces of black licorice for the legs and head. Kneeling donkey: lay four Tootsie Rolls in a diamond formation and spread frosting on the top. Then attach a candy bar to form the body and attach a bent Tootsie Roll for the neck and head (use a toothpick if desired). Squeeze a line of frosting on the donkey's head to create a mane.

STEP SIX: MARY, JOSEPH, AND THE SHEPHERDS

Slide a toothpick through a gumdrop, a fruit wedge, and another gumdrop to create a body. Make head coverings with a piece of fruit leather or make hair with frosting. Give each shepherd a staff by attaching a candy cane to the shepherd's body (using frosting).

Ask your kids, “How did the shepherds know to come to the stable? How do you think Mary and Joseph felt about the visitors coming to see Jesus?”

CHEESEBURGER BITES FAMILY TIME RECIPE

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 12 slices American cheese, chopped
- 2 cans refrigerated biscuits, 6-oz (10 total)
- 1/4 cup ketchup

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 400° F.
2. Add beef, salt, and pepper to a large skillet on high heat and crumble as you cook, 6-8 minutes then stir in the Worcestershire sauce. Remove from heat. Allow cooling for about 5 minutes.
3. Break each biscuit into two layers, creating a total of 20 biscuit rounds.
4. Spray the muffin tin with baking spray and have your kids lightly press the biscuit rounds into the center.
5. When the meat has cooled, allow your kids to mix it with the cheese and spoon it into the muffin tins on the biscuit dough.
6. Bake for 15-18 minutes, or until biscuits are browned.
7. Serve with just a bit of ketchup on top of each bite.
8. You may choose to add your own flair with sauteed mushrooms, onions, or other favorite burger toppings.



CHRISTMAS TREE BREAD

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- pizza dough (refrigerated or homemade)
- 3/4 block cream cheese
- 1 cup provolone and mozzarella shredded cheese mix
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 tsp. Italian spices
- 3 Tbsp. salted butter
- fresh herbs (e.g., basil, thyme, and rosemary)
- Marinara sauce for dipping (optional)

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 425° F and grease a baking sheet.
2. Mix cream cheese, shredded cheese mix, and Italian spices together.
3. Roll out the dough and cut it into 30 to 36 even pieces.
4. Place 1/2 tablespoon cheese mix onto each dough piece.
5. Roll each dough piece into a ball.
6. Place 6 or 7 balls in a row toward the bottom of baking sheet (this is the bottom of tree).
7. Build tree, using one fewer ball for each row (to create a triangle shape), ending with one ball at the top.
8. Place 4 balls under the bottom row for the tree trunk.
9. Melt 1 tablespoon of butter and brush over the tree.
10. Bake for 25-30 minutes.
11. Wash your herbs and mince together with garlic clove.
12. Melt remaining butter, add herbs and garlic, and drizzle over tree.

15-MIN CREAMY TOMATO SOUP

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 (28-ounce) can of crushed tomatoes
- 1 (28-ounce) can of diced tomatoes
- 1 Tbsp. crushed garlic
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- 1/3 cup butter
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 15-20 basil leaves, chopped

WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Combine the tomatoes, broth, and garlic. Bring to a boil and let boil for 10 minutes.

2. Reduce the heat to low and stir in the sugar and butter. Mix until they are dissolved, melted, and well-combined.
3. Slowly pour in the heavy cream while stirring until all the cream is combined and the soup is creamy.
4. Stir in the basil.
5. Serve hot with freshly grated parmesan cheese!



Gifts for Jesus

DECEMBER.

It's easy to get swept up in the twinkling lights, sweet smells, and dash to find the perfect gift. But what about the meaning of Christmas? How do we teach our children about the most special gift ever given and keep our focus on Jesus?

Decorating the Christmas tree, baking Christmas cookies, buying gifts, and planning parties can all be blessings we enjoy with our families. The trick is to not be overtaken with these things so that we miss the greatest blessing of the season: a holy birthday that was the precursor to each of us receiving new life; a baby born to save the world.

This season, create a "Gifts for Jesus" advent calendar—a daily challenge to offer a gift to Jesus in the form of kindness toward others. **This fun family activity will help you focus your eyes on Jesus by sharing His love with others; and it can become a special family tradition once you create your keepsake advent calendar.**

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Craft foam board
- 25 square card stock 3x3
- Christmas ribbon
- Glue
- Paint
- Markers
- Thumbtacks or mini clothespins



WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Paint your craft foam board or leave it white.
- Stretch ribbon across the board in five rows and glue the ends on the back of the board.
- Using markers, write 1 to 25 on each card stock.
- On the backside, you'll write an activity you can do as a family as a gift to Jesus.
- When you're done, you can attach the cards along the ribbon using mini clothespins or thumbtacks.

The gifts can be as simple as offer someone a hug, let others go first, pray for your neighbors.

Other gifts can be more involved: donate groceries to a food pantry, go caroling around the neighborhood, send handmade cards to a nursing home. The important thing is to remember why you are doing each act of kindness: to bring hope to others by showing the love of Jesus.

Pray each day that your hearts will stay connected to Jesus—the greatest gift ever given—and that your kindness will bless others.

by Cristina Wright, Volunteer Leader, NLC North

The Zechariah Pictionary Game

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Dry erase board and markers or big pieces of paper (something large enough for everyone to see)
- Bible
- Notecards or scraps of paper
- Phone or timer

BEFORE YOU START

Write the prompts found in the chart below on scraps of paper or notecards. Read Luke chapter 1 from the Bible and discuss how Zechariah was mute, he could not talk. He had to write down messages to talk to people. Talk about how Zechariah had to wait for a long time both for his son to be born and for the Messiah to come.

TIME TO PLAY!

Divide everyone into two teams.

One person from the first team will select a card with a prompt. A timer will be set for one minute. They will have 60 seconds to draw what they read on their card while their team tries to guess.

Their team must say their answer aloud, but the person drawing may not speak. They may point, mime, or draw.

Points are awarded to the team who guesses the picture correctly. If the timer goes off and the picture has not been correctly guessed, the other team gets one chance to make a guess.

Then, it is the next team's turn to choose a prompt and draw a picture (silently!).

The first team with 10 points wins!

PROMPTS

Frankincense, Gold, and Myrrh	Mary and Joseph
The Stable	Cousin Elizabeth
Angels	The Star
Christmas Tree	Baby Jesus
Three Wise Men	Shepherds
Donkey	Silent Night
Mute	Waiting



A Time of Expectation

This season is a time of both celebration and hope. Jesus' birth was a promise fulfilled and points us to the joy of a faithful Savior. And while we rejoice in the victory of Christ's birth, we also hope for the victory of His return. We peacefully anticipate this, knowing our God is one who keeps His promises. We can prepare our hearts as well by remaining in an attitude of repentance and humility. Throughout the years, our hope always remains in the Messiah.

As you respond in worship during the month of December, think about the impact of Jesus' initial coming and His future return. As a family, create a colorful paper chain and write a God statement, or a truth about who God is, on one link each day. Each day, after you have attached a link to the chain, pause and pray together, asking God to reveal this part of Himself to you in the days to come.

SCRIPTURE:

"Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1 ASV

by Annie Cribbs, Care Ministries Event and Operations Coordinator, NLC North

- **WEEK 1:** How does Christ's birth and return impact your life now?
- **WEEK 2:** How can we live our lives in anticipation of His return?
- **WEEK 3:** What has God done in your life recently that caused you to rejoice?
- **WEEK 4:** How has Jesus' first coming reconciled our relationship with God?



A JOYFUL LITTLE TREE

Hi, my name is Teresa Tree. I am a little artificial tree that is reusable each year. However, I don't really like to be called "artificial" because I'm very real and I bring joy to the family I live with. Every Christmas I am set out in the living room window of the house that belongs to the pretty lady and the tall man.

Last year, when I was being put away, the tall man twisted me a bit and I got out of joint. I was about to hibernate for an entire year, so I hoped I'd be better by this Christmas.

When the time came to prepare for Christmas this year, the tall man and the pretty lady discovered that I couldn't stand straight, and they were not sure they could use me again. But it was too late to purchase another one because the stores were sold out. Thank goodness!

The pretty lady stood and stared at me for a long while. Then, using a wooden ruler she had in her drawer and a piece of twine, she fixed me so I could stand in the window and look festive for another Christmas.

But I was sad. I knew this was probably my last Christmas and that I would be replaced with a new tree next year. **So, I gave it my all.** I stood in the front window of the living room and shined bright. I presented a large assortment of ornaments that represented a host of wonderful memories and trips from the family I lived with. It felt good to look good because, after all, **we were celebrating God's gift to everyone...**the baby Jesus would grow up and save the world from sin!

Then the time came to be taken down. I knew then, it was surely my last Christmas. The pretty lady began removing my lights and ornaments which only confirmed my fear that I was no longer needed.

But then a Christmas miracle happened!

The tall man discovered where I was out of joint and fixed me! Next, the pretty lady fluffed my branches and seemed to look at me optimistically. Then they covered me up and put me in my hibernating place. As I began to get sleepy for a long seasonal nap, I thought maybe, just maybe, I'll get another chance to show my beauty.

Just like God can put our lives back in order when we are broken and just like Jesus is the Ruler of our lives who makes us whole again, I am a living (not artificial) example of this miracle.

So, if anyone reads this and appreciates the joyful attitude that I have in celebrating Jesus' birth every year, please write to the pretty lady. Help her to see that I still have more Christmas celebrations in me to serve and light up a room for Jesus. I don't have to be in the main room, just any room where my lights for Jesus can be seen.

I'm going to go to sleep now. Goodnight.

Love, Teresa Tree

P.S. You can send your letters and pictures to the pretty lady at:



Christmas

FAMILY Night



Thursday, December 15th

6:30 - 7:30 PM

New Life Church, North

Join us for family fun, worship,
the Christmas story, s'mores galore,
and hot chocolate

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