



THE SIGNS OF
CHRISTMAS



ADVENT 2019

THE SIGNS OF *CHRISTMAS*

ASK A SIGN FOR YOURSELF FROM THE LORD YOUR GOD. . .

ISAIAH 7:11

The *Signs of Christmas* are all around us, pointing us to Christmas morning when angels rejoice and proclaim the good news that a *Savior is born, who is Christ the Lord*.

What are *The Signs of Christmas* that stir your heart and help prepare you for Christmas morning? Maybe it's the change of weather, warm winter clothes and a cup of hot chocolate that announce to you that Christmas is coming. Or, maybe it's Christmas lights, Christmas trees and stockings hung by the fire. For some, *The Signs of Christmas* are found in the carols, music, movies and television shows of the season. For others, *The Signs of Christmas* are the gatherings with family and friends to share a special meal or to exchange gifts.

The *Signs of Christmas* are found in the days of Advent, when we purposefully prepare ourselves for the birth of Jesus. *The Hanging of the Green*, the lighting of Advent candles, the *Sounds of Christmas Concert*, and the Christmas Eve candle-lighting service are a few of the signs at First Baptist that Christmas is coming and the birth of our Lord is near.

The Signs of Christmas are found in scripture as well. Isaiah 7:14 proclaims that the Lord will Himself provide us a sign. In Luke 2, the angels tell the shepherds to look for a sign in order to find the new born Savior. And of course, Matthew tells us how the Magi recognized a sign in the heavens that led them to Jesus.

The Signs of Christmas are all around! But, we must remember that the signs are not the meaning or purpose of Christmas. Instead, the signs point us beyond themselves to something greater, something majestic, something mysterious and something miraculous — Immanuel! In Jesus, God is with us and the world will never be the same.

This devotion guide is a gift from First Baptist Norman. It is one of *The Signs of Christmas* that we share together as a congregation. The members of our church wrote its pages as they reflected on the meaningful *Signs of Christmas* in their own life and spiritual journey. Our prayer is that you will be more aware of and sensitive to *The Signs of Christmas* in 2019. May they point you to Jesus, who is Christ the Lord! Listen. Look. Taste. Touch. Smell. And when you recognize the signs, I pray that you will have the courage to respond in *Hope, Peace, Joy and Love*.

Dr. Wade E. Smith

CELEBRATE HIS GIFTS

*I bring you GOOD NEWS
of GREAT JOY...*

Luke 2:10

One of *The Signs of Christmas* is the giving and receiving of gifts. The Scripture tells us *God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son*. Jesus, whose birth we celebrate on Christmas morning, is that Gift. *Behold!* declared the angel, *I bring you good news of great joy. . .there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

The birth of Jesus opens doors for us to experience the gifts of God in new and deeper ways. His life, death and resurrection make possible the gift of salvation to all who believe. As we unwrap the gift of salvation we discover that it is a multi-faceted gift of mercy, forgiveness, healing and new life. The gifts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control manifest themselves as the fruit of this new life.

Advent preparation leads to Christmas celebration. As we prepare to receive and *Celebrate His Gifts* on Christmas morning, let us do so by giving gifts of celebration and thanksgiving during this Advent season.

First, we can offer gifts to support the work of missionaries.

Missionaries live among people of different cultures to share the Gift of Jesus with the nations (people) of the world. A gift to World Missions through the Lottie Moon and/or Global Missions offerings enables and sustains missionaries as they live among the nations. First Baptist's 2019 World Missions goal is \$66,000. Your gift can be designated, given in worship, brought by the church office, or made at fbcnorman.org.

Second, our Christmas Eve Candle Lighting service is one of the special worship services of the year. Join my family in bringing a gift for baby Jesus. A package of diapers or baby wipes celebrates the birth of the Christ-child. The gift of formula satisfies the hungry cry of an infant. A warm blanket or coat helps keep a mother and child warm on a cold winter's night. Allow your special gift to be a tangible way that you celebrate and give thanks for *The Signs of Christmas*. These gifts will be distributed through our Community Ministries, meeting the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. Would you *Celebrate His Gifts* by bringing a gift to Baby Jesus and placing it under the tree on Christmas Eve?

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

THE SIGN OF ELIJAH

JOHN 1:1-14; MALACHI 4:5-6

MATTHEW 11:7-14; LUKE 1:5-25



THE SIGNS OF
CHRISTMAS



HOPE

DECEMBER 1-DECEMBER 7

SIGNS POINTING THE WAY

Our world is much different than it was 2,000 years ago. Back then, there probably weren't billboards advertising donkey sales, sandal repair, or even perfume. Today, signs are everywhere. We are inundated with signs. With so much information to process, we rarely have the time, take the time or make the time to ponder what a sign sent from God might look like.

At critical times in my life, I believe God has sent unmistakable signs that even I could see.

I have felt God's grace and kindness, His provision and care, and His reassurance and love, all with the invitation to hold on to Him to see me through. I've experienced this while praying and through the actions and words of other people including friends, family and even strangers.

*My prayer this Christmas is that our spiritual eyes
are opened and we learn to see the important things. I
pray that our hearts become tender
with our minds receptive to the reality
that God may be sending us a sign.
God has sent ordinary people signs throughout
history and still does today.
Thank you Lord for the signs pointing
the way to the ultimate gift of Jesus, the Saviour.*

Joe Theige

WHERE ARE THE SIGNS?

Growing up in Thailand, where my parents were missionaries, we did not have a lot of traditional signs of Christmas. The weather stayed warm; there were no real Christmas trees with the smell of pine (although we did occasionally decorate a palm tree); we had no mantle to hang stockings; and our vacations were spent at the beach rather than skiing on a snowy mountains slope. Sometimes it was hard to believe that Christmas would really come. But it always did. We would wake up Christmas morning and there would be presents under our heavily tinsled tree, and stockings stuffed with goodies pinned to the chair cushions. We ate cinnamon rolls and pumpkin bread for breakfast and sweet and sour pork and chicken and cashews for lunch. This was our traditional Christmas.

There were many signs in the Bible, though, that Christmas and Christ was coming. Many of those weren't believed either. In Luke 1:18, the angel Gabriel tells Zacharias that his wife will have a son named John. I don't know about you, but if Gabriel in all his glory were standing in front of me, I think I would believe him! But Zacharias says, *How shall I know this for certain?* I can imagine that Gabriel rolls his eyes a little because he says, *I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of God; I have been sent to speak to you...* In other words, *Are you kidding me Zacharias? I am God's angel! Why would I lie to you?* Gabriel's next assignment was to tell Mary she would have a baby named Jesus even though she was a virgin. *How can this be?* Mary asked. Gabriel, (perhaps with a little impatience?) tells Mary, in Luke 1:37 *Nothing will be impossible with God!*

Are you seeing the *Signs of Christmas*? I don't really mean the decorations, shopping and meal planning, although that is definitely a fun part of the season. I mean signs of *Christ with us*, signs of what God has done and what He is doing. If I am honest, I don't always see the signs. But I do know God is still working to complete His plans in spite of my doubts.

...My word, that goes forth from My mouth...shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55:11

God's plan is more powerful than our doubts. He has and will accomplish his plans, whether or not we always believe it. After all, Christmas finally came to Thailand; John was born in spite of Zacharias's doubts and, Christ was born to fulfill God's ultimate plan for all of us.

Pat Wilson

DECEMBER 2

NEW HOPE

I love Christmas. All the music, lights, cards, gifts, parties, decorated trees, stockings, good food and family time. But the traditions I love most are the setting up of the manger scene remembering the actual reason for the celebration, and writing the family Christmas letter, recalling the blessings of the past year.

This year our family had a special blessing. On August 11, 2016, my 16-month-old great-grandson, Graham, was diagnosed with mixed-phenotype acute leukemia (MPAL), a subtype that accounts for only 2 to 3 percent of all acute leukemia cases and has only a 50-75 percent long-term survival rate. He was immediately flown to St. Jude Hospital for treatment. We were devastated and began praying and asking for prayers. We were thankful for all the prayers from family, friends, and even strangers. On August 27, 2016, the Lord gave me hope as I read Psalm 41:3, *the Lord will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness.*

After 2 ½ years of weekly infusions and daily oral chemo, March 2019, Graham, along with doctors, nurses, family, friends, and prayer warriors, celebrated by ringing the bell and declaring *no more chemo!* God answered our prayers for healing.

This year we look forward to Christmas with new hope for his future, realizing anew that God can do more than we ask or imagine according to His power that is at work within us. Just as Graham finished his chemo, an added blessing was the birth of his baby brother, Whit Thomas, on February 19. We are truly blessed.

As we anticipate the Christmas season, our hearts and minds are reminded of the glorious birth of our Savior. With excitement, we decorate our homes, make plans to spend time with those we love, and do kind things for neighbors and those less fortunate.

God's love in sending Jesus brings a love that permeates our life and flows with new vigor at the Christmas season as we enjoy the greatest gift the world has ever known.

Let's count our blessings of hope, thanking God and rejoicing.

Sallie Kennedy

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:4

LIGHT DESPITE THE DARKNESS

The definition of hope is the feeling of wanting something to happen and thinking that it could happen: a feeling that something good will happen or be true.

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.

Desmond Tutu

This is exactly the hope that ancient Jews had when they were promised a Messiah, a Savior. That hope came to fruition for some Jews with the birth of Jesus Christ. Literally hundreds of Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled about every phase of His life. These prophecies include that He would be born of a virgin in Bethlehem, that He would be called Immanuel and would be a minister to all nations. The prophecies also contain astonishing details of His last day on earth, His resurrection and ascension. The odds of only eight prophecies being fulfilled are an astronomical one in ten to the 21st power (10^{21}).

One popular prophecy among Christians is found in Isaiah 7:14 *All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means God is with us).*

Today, more than 2,000 years after Jesus' life on earth, we maintain the hope that he will keep his promise to return and that we will dwell with Him for eternity. This hope is reinforced in New Testament scripture such as Matthew 25:31-32 (NLT) *"But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And John 14:1-3 Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.*

As Christians, our faith is based solely on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our hope is based on His promise to return and take us home.

Jim and Judy Spearman

ONE RED LIGHT!

My mother loved everything about Christmas. She loved to decorate the tree and the house inside and out. She made sure she had lights on the house and on the front bushes. She wanted her decorated tree to be seen through the front window.

In January of 2003, she moved next door to her best friend, Marion Lalli. Thanksgiving weekend of that year, Marion's son, Rodger, came over and asked if he could decorate her house for Christmas so it could "match" Marion's house. He used green lights to edge Marion's yard and red lights to edge my mother's yard. The line of lights would meet at the property line. It was beautiful. Rodger added to both yards every year and always had the yards outlined in red and green lights. He did that for nine years. It was a beautiful sign of Christian love and friendship.

I lost my mom in March 2012. We were very close and I had devoted the final years of her life to caring for her. I missed going to her house and visiting. Some Sundays after church, I'd ask Chuck to drive me by to see her house.

As Christmas approached that first year it was difficult to think that her house wouldn't "match" Marion's house anymore. One night I asked Chuck to drive me by her house. When we turned into the neighborhood I could see the lights at Marion's and darkness on my mom's yard. I looked at the line of green lights lining Marion's front yard. As my eyes followed it to the property line, I burst into tears! At the end of the green lights, next to the property line, was one red light! Rodger has done this every year since, and every year that one red light brings tears to my eyes. It shows me Hope: A Light in the Darkness. Hope from a baby brought into the world. And because of that Hope I know I will see my mom again. Jesus is the Light of the World!

Anne Lawrence

In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1: 4-5

HOPE: GOD'S LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

The year was 2008, one of the darkest times in my life. My marriage of 20 years was falling apart, my children were suffering, my oldest child graduated and joined the Navy. July 3, 2008, I told my then husband, I did not want to be married to him any longer and that began a journey of faith, hope and spiritual renewal.

The children and I moved out of our big suburban home just outside of Tucson into a very small modest home in downtown Tucson closer to work and school. We moved out the end of July on a Saturday and were in church Sunday morning, a place we had not been in a while as a family. God showed up and was so powerful in my life. I needed Him and He was there.

In September, the children were still suffering. They came to me together, all three of them, and they asked me — in unison — to move them home! Home is in Oklahoma. My second son added, *BUT can we wait until after football season?*

This was hard, we had signed a one year lease, I had the best job I had ever had making more money than I had ever made and life was really good, except the elephant in the room — the divorce.

I began praying and felt it was the right thing to do. On December 26 the movers arrived and asked where we were going. My response, *We are going to Oklahoma. I have no idea what town, but when I figure that out, I will let you know.* Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

God was right beside me each step of the way. I am leaving out a lot of good stuff, but please know God's hand was right beside us! We left Tucson arriving in Oklahoma City to see my Daddy and grandparents on December 28. On Monday the 29, I had an interview and got the job on the spot! On Monday afternoon, I found us a home. The movers arrived on January 1 and the kids began school shortly after.

Was it all easy? NO, but God's hand was there, with each turn in the road!! Hope: God's Light in the Darkness.

By Lisa Driskill

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen.*

Hebrews 11:1

DECEMBER 6

HOPE FULFILLED

The temperature was hovering in the mid 30s on Saturday, December 23, 1995, when board members, employees, and volunteers of all ages gathered at 4:00 p.m. to begin preparations for the annual Christmas party. The teen volunteers were an important part of the event as they would lead the group in Christmas carols and our son, Ryan, would portray Santa Claus. We were rushing around cleaning, decorating and preparing food and gifts for the 100 plus persons we were expecting in an hour. This highly anticipated event in the lives of our friends was important because it would be the only Christmas celebration many of them would have. Everyone was laughing and joyful as we worked.

Just as we were getting into full gear but not nearly finished with our preparations the front door blew open. A young man and woman were literally pushed inside by the sharp, cold wind. They both appeared to be in their late teens, thin, poorly dressed and not wearing sweaters or coats. In addition the young woman appeared to be at least 8 months pregnant. They were shivering from the cold and said they had hitchhiked from Elk City to Norman as they had no car. They chose Norman because they had heard it was a community that helped people. Our preparations came to an abrupt halt. We sat the couple down, got them some warm blankets, hot food and coffee. They had no belongings. We could not help but think that we were encountering our own Mary, Joseph and Jesus that night. They said they had hoped to find a place where they could receive help and were told that Food and Shelter was such a place. They joined in the party and had the best time of all. For those of us who were privileged to be there it was a memorable evening and a huge reminder of God's providence.

But the story is not yet over. Our resourceful director made a place for them to stay at the shelter even though all the rooms were taken. Does this remind you of that night so long ago in Bethlehem when Jesus was born? The young couple's baby was born in a few weeks and they continued to stay at the shelter several more months. The young man got a job and our director helped them secure their own place. Just like Mary and Joseph this young couple hoped that someone would extend help. That night we saw the promise of hope fulfilled for a homeless couple and the baby they were expecting. We saw God's hand at work: we saw a miracle performed through God's love. May we all have as much faith and hope as this young couple and extend these to others.

Sarah Redwine

DECEMBER 7

A VIRGIN WILL BE WITH CHILD

ISAIAH 7:14

LUKE 1:26-38



THE SIGNS OF
CHRISTMAS



PEACE

DECEMBER 8-DECEMBER 14

SURPRISED BY GOD

I love the story of Christmas...the whole story of Christmas. When I was in the first grade, I remember my Sunday school teacher reading the famous passage from Luke 2, as we always do every Christmas. But this time, my teacher talked about an element of the story I had never fully considered before. She shared more about what led up to Jesus' birth and how this was all a part of God's plan to save the world!

She had me on the edge of my little kid-sized chair. She told about how God's chosen people had waited so long for the Messiah to come and redeem them. Many were waiting for a great ruler to make a grand entrance because they thought that's how God should storm in and triumph over evil! But...that's not what happened at all. God chose to send Jesus to enter the world as a baby in a manger. My mind was blown away by the creative direction God took with this plan to save the world. So unpredictable! *Wow! God really surprised them, huh?* I said. *Yes, He did,* she chuckled. *God's plans are so much better than our own!*

It was a wonderful lesson that I still learn from today. As I go through life, there are times I struggle with letting God be *in charge* of my plans. Just like the people who were thinking the Messiah should arrive as a great ruler, I think my plans make sense. I think my plans are the best for the situation. Do you ever find yourself doing this, too? I know it is our human nature to want to control things. Whether it be relationships, job situations, even our health, we want to be in control because we think we know what is best for us. And if we feel like we have lost control...life gets scary and we do not see how our plan will end well. But by putting my trust in His plan, I am not losing control — I'm gaining peace!

In these times, I am forgetting that I am only seeing a small piece of God's big plan. I serve the God who parted the Red Sea, allowed a small boy to defeat a giant, shut the mouths of lions....and rescued the world by sending a tiny baby in a manger to deliver us. Why would I ever doubt His plan for me?

This season, as we read the Christmas story, I pray we are all reminded of the whole story. May we never forget God's amazing, unpredictable rescue plan He designed just for us. May we faithfully trust Him each day and allow Him to be *in charge* of our life plans. I know He will really surprise us with plans and blessings we would have never imagined!

Staci Rhea

*As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways and my
thoughts than your thoughts.*

Isaiah 55:9

DECEMBER 8

THROUGH IT ALL

This year my family has endured a lot more than most families should. As I look back on 2019, I'm reminded of the worry, the fear, the panic — more emotions than one family should have to face in only 12 months. We've felt heartache, we've suffered loss but, and this is what I'm most proud of, we've also grown closer together.

Even though it's been a difficult year, there's also been a few moments peppered in that have been nothing short of amazing. I'm reminded of the laughs my family shared in my parent's cozy living room, going over photo albums and retelling stories. I'm reminded of the hugs and personal notes from friends offering words of encouragement and prayer. I'm reminded of our love for one another.

I'm also reminded that through this pain, through the tears, through the darkness one horrible year can bring, I've also taken a personal journey. This year has led me closer to God than I've ever been before.

This year has made me trust that He's beside me every step of the way and that He's comforting me. Without a doubt, I know He listens to me as prayers were answered this year. Most importantly, I know He loves me. God is the source of what gives me strength on some days. Seeing the beauty He gives us daily. Seeing the blessings He's giving me in this lifetime, how could I not see His everlasting power?

When my aunt passed away in July, she left a huge hole in our family. One that I'm not sure will ever be refilled. But since her passing, there's been a different kind of feeling, a feeling of peace. The peaceful feeling she's no longer under the grips of cancer. She's free. There's a feeling of joy when I think of how she loved so much and fought so hard. There's a feeling of hope knowing that one day I'll see her face again.

I remember the last time my family saw her before she passed. She told my dad, her baby brother, *Now Don, you behave*. Her baby brother is 80 so behaving is not always as simple as it would seem. But that moment, as her voice cracked a little, I was reminded that she loved with everything she had. I believe at that very moment her smile, her voice, her loving words to *behave*, were all a light from God.

Since her passing, my daily prayer is that I'm able to be God's light for someone else. I pray that my voice and my smile will show the world how amazing God can be. How, even though a difficult year, He's beside us. He's comforting us. He's listening to us. And, most importantly, He loves us.

Shana Adkisson

DECEMBER 9

A SPECIAL TIME OF YEAR

A very young boy growing up in small communities with his grandparents on both sides of the family, could tell when the wonderful days of Christmas were growing near. The Grandparents lived fairly close together in Southern Oklahoma. The trees would be brought in from the surrounding farms and/or oil leases, the aroma of both grandmothers cooking pies and cakes getting ready for the families to gather to celebrate Christmas time together were strong signs that Christmas would soon be there. Presents would arrive under the tree; and the young lad would carefully search for his name on the gifts. This was an exciting time for a kindergarten age child.

As the young man grew older, he began to realize that the *Signs of Christmas* at the church were very important. The song selection, the Sunday school lessons, the sermons as well as the Christmas pageant were strong visual and hearing signs that something special was in the air.

There was no television in those days, however as the young man strolled about the towns where they happened to live, he could see the signs in all the store windows. The decorations on the homes, stores, churches, streets and schools all led to the wonderful thoughts that Christmas was coming soon.

As a teenager and new Christian, he began to understand the significance of his favorite time of year. Over 2,700 years ago, Isaiah had foretold of the coming birth as well as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then nearly 2,000 years ago Luke and others told us about the actual birth, death and resurrection of that same Lord Jesus Christ. It was becoming clear to the teenager that the signs from the Bible had a very important meaning for him. The marvelous Christmas passages in the New Testament were clear signs that Christ came to rescue all us from our sins.

What makes this time of year so special is that we can pause from our daily trials and tribulations and sit quietly and think of all the reasons we are blessed. It is the signs of Christmas that alerts us to that very special time of year.

Leon Price

DECEMBER 10

TREASURE AND PONDER

A baby. Your first-born. A son. Like most women, Mary undoubtedly had hopes and dreams for what her future family might be. She was engaged. She likely dreamed of having a child and dreamed of what the experience of carrying and having a baby might entail. She probably dreamed of what that child might become, hoping she would be a good mother. Her dreams of pregnancy, family and childbirth most certainly did not fit her reality: she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit; her betrothed, Joseph, planned to divorce her quietly while she was pregnant; she gave birth in an undesirable setting; an angel and heavenly host greeted her child's arrival and her son was (and is) the son of God and Messiah. How is that for an unexpected outcome?

What is most striking in the passage to me is actually not the miraculous and almost outlandish turn of events in Mary's life, but how she *treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart*. After each twist and turn in her story, she took a breath and reflected on what had just transpired. Her life was forever changed and she likely felt a greater love than she had ever felt.

Giving birth to my baby, my first-born, my son, this past year also forever changed me. As a parent, you feel a greater love than you have ever felt. You try to take moments amidst the chaos and life's twists and turns to reflect and try to *treasure up all [those] things and [ponder] them in (your) heart*.

During this Christmas season, amidst the sometimes chaotic and frenetic pace of shopping, gift-wrapping, party-throwing, concert-attending and more, might we take a breath and try to *treasure up* the blessings we have and *ponder...in [our] heart* the lavish and perfect love we have from God that forever changes us?

God sent His baby, His first-born, His son, from the perfection of heaven into our depraved and flawed world exclusively to save us. What love! Jesus tasted filth so we could experience beauty. He allowed chaos that we might have peace. He endured death so we could have life. He withstood the ultimate hate so we would have the ultimate love.

Emily Drennan Lopez

*Alleluia, how the angels sang
Alleluia, praise to the King
Alleluia, peace on earth to men
A crown for a cradle: that's how love began*

DECEMBER 11

I HAVE SEEN THE LIGHT

In the late 1980s, songwriters Chris Machen and Robert Sterling teamed up to produce a Christmas cantata titled *We Beheld His Glory*. Toward the end of the songwriting process, a song emerged based on Isaiah 9:2 and Matthew 2:1-2 which was appropriately titled, *I Have Seen the Light*.

The Isaiah 9:2 passage and this song have always resonated with me. Truth be told, I could have written the opening three lines of this song because I have settled for lies and have been blinded by the darkness of sin and this world most of my life. You see, I grew up in a home with an alcoholic father. For the first half of my life I believed that my father did not like or love me. I was also severely teased and bullied by my peers as a child and teenager. On several occasions the intense bullying crossed the line and became violent and abusive.

All of these horrible situations combined with many others brought about the perfect storm of darkness in my life. I felt unloved, hopeless, rejected, isolated and worthless. I became depressed, withdrawn, anxious, and fearful. I had convinced myself something was wrong with me. I wanted to end my life.

BUT GOD.

As a 12-year-old boy in the midst of walking in and experiencing great darkness I saw a great light and that light was Jesus. He called my name while I was attending a junior youth church camp in the summer of 1988 and I gave my life to Him. The darkness and heaviness began to lift and for the first time in my life I experienced true *hope, love, joy* and *peace*.

I wish I could say my life has been a bed of roses since that day but it has been far from it. We live in a broken and dark world where the enemy prowls around like a lion seeking to devour our lives. For me, he loves to do this by bringing up and reminding me of the past. When I allow him to do this, the shadows reappear. Darkness begins to settle back in. Hopelessness comes knocking on the door of my heart and mind. And if I open this door I begin entering the land of deep darkness again which only leads to debilitating fear, anxiety, hopelessness, and depression.

As I write this devotion I find myself walking through a new season of darkness. A darkness that I never thought I would experience. BUT GOD is faithful. His mercies are new every morning. He brings beauty from ashes. His perfect love casts out all fear. His light always bursts through the shadows delivering the dawn. And when the enemy tries to take me down I remind him that *I Have Seen the Light!*

BUT GOD,
Rev. Chad E. Smith

DECEMBER 12

THE BEAUTY OF A HUMBLE BIRTH

Every December when I was a little girl, my daddy would take me shopping at the AMC or GEX store (pre-Walmart). I had saved my money and wanted to buy a new shepherd, or angel, or camel to add to my nativity set.

Now, this nativity wasn't the fanciest thing you've ever seen. It had wax figurines and the stable was made of cheap particle board. But, it was special to me because I could play with it and make the characters come to life.

Over the years, I've bought or been given other nativities that are much nicer. But, the one I had as a child is still the first one I put out and is center stage to all the others. It's falling apart and many of the characters are broken or missing. But, the main part of the nativity is still there — Joseph, Mary, Baby Jesus and the stable.

This crude, broken nativity reminds me that Jesus wasn't born in a fancy hotel or even a pristine hospital. No, He was born in a stable — not even the cleanest or most sanitary conditions. Jesus came to us humbly and without any extras. We don't always remember this each year. We can get caught up trying to make everything perfect — our house decorations, our gifts to family and friends, even our celebrations.

This is my prayer this year:

Dear Lord — Thank you that your plan from the beginning was for this unpretentious, almost unnoticed night that brought your salvation into the world. And, help me remember to simplify my expectations and focus on the beauty of Jesus humble birth — the wonderful expression of your love.

Nancy Gardner

*While Mary and Joseph were there in Bethlehem,
the time came for Mary to give birth.*

She gave birth to a son, her firstborn.

She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hotel.

Luke 2:6-7

IN BEGINNING GOD!

As you begin reading scripture, and if you start in the beginning, you read the account of God Beginning! In that beginning, God created the heavens and earth and immediately we are blessed with the end of total darkness with the introduction of Light!!

Sometimes we skim over the creation story and never give it much thought, but can you imagine the world, my existence and your existence, in total darkness? Certainly, we talk about the darkness of evil creeping into our world today, but even then there is still the hope of light. But what about pure darkness? Defined as the absence of light... but why then, isn't light defined as absence of darkness? Rather light is defined as the natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible. Of course there is an explanation that we learn at an early age, that it only takes a spark to break the darkness, but have you ever tried to remove the light with abundant darkness? Save yourself some time because it cannot be done.

Growing up in the rural areas of southwest Texas, I had the privilege of living an early life void of the oppressive lights of the city and have enjoyed experiencing nights void of light as compared to nights filled the lights of stars, and a bright full moon. It is a different life than most of us live in 2019. Finding a natural place where you are far enough from your neighbors to not even begin to see a faint light in the distance, not light enough to see the hand in front of your face or to lead you home.

It seems that was the condition that God overcame in the creation, but then at the birth of Jesus offered to all of the world eternal light that would lead us all home! God has shown through all of history his desire for us to walk in His light fully in relationship with Him. The light of Christmas, used a bright light to get the attention of the shepherds at Jesus birth, a bright star guided the Magi to make their long trek and visit to Jesus. It is the light of Christmas that continues to guide us to Him today.

Signs of Christmas! It seems that it must start with the light that offers hope and then leads us to a broad relationship with God.

Praise God for the Light!

Roy Joe Ham

A SON CALLED IMMANUEL

ISAIAH 7:14

LUKE 2:1-7

MATTHEW 1:18-25



THE SIGNS OF
CHRISTMAS



JOY

DECEMBER 15-DECEMBER 21

CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS

Reflecting on Christmases of the past evokes a mixture of pleasure and sadness. There are many Christmas experiences to reflect upon and share. Three of these have had a profound impact on my life.

I was born midway through the Great Depression and the effect of that event, followed closely by WWII, had a dramatic influence on my development as a person. The first Christmas I vividly remember occurred shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. During the time between December 7 and December 25 that year I heard and sensed the thoughts and emotions of adults around me. It was a time of confusion and fear for me. Thankfully, I had the support of parents and other adults who helped me learn and apply Bible verses.

So it was natural to recall John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* For a 6-year-old, that was a source of comfort and hope. It still is!

One of my favorite memories is the Christmas season of 1952. The highlight of that Christmas season was hearing for the first time a live performance of Handel's Messiah. I had heard recordings with very limited technology but never an in-person experience of a live performance. Perhaps it was because of the particular time in my life, or the uncertainty of world events and their effect on the lives of people, but the performance of the Messiah by a large choir and orchestra had an incredible and lasting impact on my life. I am still thrilled and deeply touched by the power and meaning of the message of Isaiah 9:6 set to majestic music.

*For unto us a child is born, unto a Son is given,
And the government shall be upon his shoulder,
And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,
The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*

Each year nuances to our family Christmas traditions are added. As our family grows, each member finds significance and joy as we worship together on Christmas Eve at our Candlelight Service, followed by dinner at home, the reading of Luke's account of the Christmas story, and our dramatization of the story. What joy we experience as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Joe Bob Weaver

DECEMBER 15

THE JOY OF FAMILY

In the Taylor household we have many signs that show us Christmas is coming. The music, the trees (yes that's plural), our nativity scene, and a lot of baking. All of these things excite us with the anticipation of Christmas Day.

Growing up, one of the most important signs to me that Christmas was soon approaching was our family's annual Sister Party. My grandmother was one of 13 kids. That is correct, 13! She had eight sisters and four brothers.

I am assuming we called it the Sister Party because there were so many of them and they ran the show. Brothers were present but were basically just there, like the rest of us, as part of the family.

I remember, there was always a ton of food. It was potluck and everyone brought something. I also remember that it was a priority to be there. Everyone would show up. It didn't matter how old or how young. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, third cousins once removed, I mean everyone! It was probably the only day the entire year that our entire family was together. Have you ever played Dirty Santa with 100 plus people? Crazyness!

Family is a huge part of my life. I would do anything for my family. Now, our family is not perfect. We all have a cousin Eddie or two in our families. We don't always see everything eye-to-eye. But I know that we all love each other and will be there for each other when the need arises.

My challenge to you this Christmas is to spend time with family. If there is someone in your family that you need to reach out to, do it. Christmas can be a time of reconciliation for you. The love of Christ is real and lives in you. I pray that you live out the love of Christ to your family this Christmas.

Clint Taylor

*Above all, love each other deeply,
because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

1 Peter 4:8

DECEMBER 16

LIGHTS FOR THE WORLD

Over the past five years I have been a part of a long standing tradition. It usually starts around August with daily check-ins at the church gym. A team formulates in early October, as the time draws near. A date and time is set for the commencement of the yearly tradition. The calendars flip to November, and it all begins. What is this tradition? Christmas lights at Jim and Vicki Stewart's house.

I have had the privilege of helping Jim setup his lights display for many years now. Jim's Christmas lights are not like most houses. Just about every inch of the house is glowing with every colored light you can imagine. It is a beautiful picture, and I get to help paint it. Some may see our team out in the yard untangling lights or solving an extension cord puzzle, and think of it as meaningless work, but I see it as a sign of joy pointing to the celebration of Christ.

Joy can be a tricky emotion to understand. Genuine joy is so easily expressed, but we can also suppress the joy in our lives. Reflect on how you may express joy to others, or how you might be suppressing the joy in your life.

We find in Matthew 5 that we are the light of the world and we are called to let our light shine before others. The birth of Jesus is a joyous occasion, as He brings life and victory to our lives.

I encourage us all to be expressive with the joy found in the birth of Christ. A yard full of lights may not be for everyone, but how can you be a sign that points to the meaning of Christmas?

Christmas is a celebration of the coming of Jesus, so let's do just that. Celebrate!

Brandon Arrington

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5: 14-16

DECEMBER 17

FINDING HOME....FINDING JESUS

When I was a child we lived in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. We lived in a neighborhood with 68 homes. All the houses were new, the same style, and white in color. It was winter and too cold for homeowners to paint the outside of their homes.

One winter afternoon my youngest brother, Doug went out to play in the snow. He was all bundled up and loved the snow. My mom told Doug to stay in our yard. As Doug played in the snow, he began to wander. The yards began to run together under a white blanket of snow and became one large winter playground.

As the afternoon began to turn to early evening, it began to get dark. My mom instructed me to bundle up and help my brother come in. Warmly bundled, I went outside but didn't see my brother. I walked but couldn't find him. Soon my entire family was frantically searching for Doug. After 30 minutes, we found Doug in a neighbor's yard. He had wandered six houses down the street in the snow and was crying. He expressed, *I wanted to come in the house and get warm, but I couldn't find my home. All the houses and yards looked the same.*

A few days after Doug's scary snow adventure, my dad had a gaslight installed in our front yard. The gaslight burned day and night. I still remember my dad's words to us all! *I put a gaslight in the front yard so you can always know where your home is. The bright light will help you find your way.*

God did the very same thing for us! He placed a bright light in the sky so that the Magi could find their way to the place where Jesus was. Yes, God lit up the sky to direct their path so they could find Jesus, His greatest gift, and a home for their hearts. Yes, the star reminds us of God's great desire and provision to love us and direct our paths. We, too, are invited to follow and worship Him.

Suzette Mason

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

Matthew 2: 9-11

A MERRY HEART

O kay. Just what does this verse from Proverbs have to do with Christmas? On the surface, nothing much, I'll admit. But look a little closer and you might be surprised. First, you might notice the word *merry*. Pretty simple really, but how many times have you heard someone shout to a friend *Christmas!* No, they usually tack *Merry* on to the front of it for the usual greeting. So is that it? Actually, it goes deeper, much deeper than this.

You see, a merry heart is usually a joyful heart. And a joyful heart is (or should be) the hallmark of a Christian. But as we enter this blessed time of year, we see happiness and merriment and JOY popping up in places we normally wouldn't expect it. At the malls, in and around town, big stores, restaurants — places where you normally meet people who have no time for you, or even carry a grumpy expression on tired faces seem transformed by some magical aire, some strange, invisible fog that permeates almost everything, everyone, and creates JOY from the ashes of unhappiness. What is this *fog*, and what gives it its power?

It's really very simple. JOY is a sign of something far too wonderful to be explained in a few words. It's a sign that points us to something far greater than ourselves. And it's a sign that has led many of us to the truth, a sign that can lead many more, if only they'll heed it.

The NIV puts it this way. *A cheerful heart is good medicine.* What does medicine do? It heals the sick. And what is sicker than a soul that doesn't know Jesus as Lord and Savior?

As this holy season approaches, let's practice spreading the medicine of the Savior to all who lack it. Be merry. And encourage others to do the same!

Merry Christmas
Doug Upchurch

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine
Proverbs 17:22a

DECEMBER 19

LIFE IS A JOY

Observing the Christmas season most of us greet each other with smiles, kind words like *Merry Christmas*, and find great pleasure in gifting others.

Why can't our attitudes and desire to be thoughtful of others last all year? That is what God has intended us to do. We do not choose our parents or the country we live in, but we do choose how we live our lives.

Each day it is not what we look at but what we see. Someone without a smile, give them one. Be less quick to anger, treat each other with respect — show appreciation for the little things. Always try to understand how others feel — start by loving, giving and living.

Love may not make the world go round but it sure will make life worth while. Loving and being loved is the gift each of us needs. Years from now nobody will remember the jobs we had, the size house we lived in or the cars we drove.

I pray the world will be a better place because I/we were important in the life of someone — a child, our children, their children and even their children's children.

Time is the most important thing you can give to anyone at any age. The true meaning of life is to plant trees whose shade we will never expect to enjoy. Let every step we take move us forward *to the wrongs that need resistance, to the rights that need assistance and to the future in the distance*. When we allow God to push us we can fly.

When I was growing up, my parents told me *life is a joy*. As I have grown older, I have learned life is service and then I realized *Service Brings Joy*.

We cannot walk with God unless we agree with Him and try to serve others. God loves each of us and has plans for us. We must try to react as God thinks. He lives within each of us.

The only thing we can take with us is what we give away. There are many ways to serve God, especially at Christmas.

Dot Adkins

*The more lowly your service to others
the greater you are. To be the greatest, be a servant.*

Matthew 23:11

DECEMBER 20

THE SIGNS OF LOVE

On my second Christmas, before I knew the real meaning of Christmas, Daddy took my hand in his as we went to the front door and outside to see the snow. Yes, I have checked weather history, and there was snow there on Christmas.

I was a *Daddy's girl* and Daddy helped to make the snow important to me that day. I think the real meaning of Christmas became a part of my life when I was 4, and, although I had heard the story before, Mama read the Christmas story from the Bible to my sister, brother, and me on Christmas Eve.

When I was in the eighth grade, we went to Grandma and Uncle Matt's in southeastern Oklahoma. Uncle Matt had a few decorations to put on a tree he had cut in the pasture, but the tree was not the focal point that Christmas Day. The wood stove was always a fixture in the living room.

Uncle Matt had bought a piece of stovepipe to replace the horizontal piece that went from the vertical stovepipe to the flue in the wall. I was to hold the vertical pipe and not let it fall and break while he cleaned out the flue with a burning rag tied onto a stick or wire. Unfortunately, the inside of the flue caught fire and flames came out and were about to ignite the wallpaper.

I yelled to Uncle Matt, who was on the roof, and, as he started trying to put out the fire, Grandma went to the crank telephone on the wall opposite the stove, turned the crank so all the party-line neighbors would know there was a problem, listen to the message, and come as quickly as they could.

The neighbors came, helped get the fire out, and fixed the stovepipe. We finally had dinner, whatever it was that Grandma and Aunt Jocy had fixed. Why fix the stovepipe on Christmas Day? It was not a regular workday, and Uncle Matt had someone there besides Grandma to help.

Which *Sign of Christmas* do these events illustrate? Probably love is the primary one, because of the sharing involved. Daddy wanted to share the snow with me. Uncle Matt and Grandma shared Christmas with us while we shared Christmas with them; I shared my abilities with Uncle Matt; the neighbors shared their love and care for our whole family; Grandma and Aunt Jocy shared their love for us with their cooking.

Sarah Myers Pool

WRAPPED AND LYING IN A MANGER

LUKE 2:8-20

JOHN 3:16



THE SIGNS OF
CHRISTMAS



LOVE

DECEMBER 22-DECEMBER 23

HIS LOVE FOR US

Our family's Christmas decorations are a jumbled mix. We have ornaments that I made as a child as well as some that Isaac and Grace made. My grandma made ornaments for us each year, and several of those also get added to the tree. We have newer decorations that I have purchased throughout the years — cookie jars, a pretty Santa plate, a wreath for the door — and even a few that were gifts.

What gets used and where varies each year, depending on our level of busyness, how many boxes we want to bring up from the basement, what surfaces we want to clear off, and how we have rearranged the room to accommodate changing needs over the years.

However, one Christmas decoration remains constant. Each year I bring out a box filled with a white bisque china Nativity set. I clear all of the family pictures from the shelf behind our couch and unbox the pieces. A deep green piece of satin is placed on the shelf first, followed by the camel, Mary, Joseph, manger, and other pieces of the set.

The Nativity set's simplicity and centrality in the room remind me that regardless of what else is going on around us throughout the Christmas season and what changes have happened in our lives that year, Jesus' birth is why we celebrate Christmas. His birth was a pivotal point in history and a culmination of years of prophecies about a coming Savior for us all.

With Christ's birth, hope was restored. God's love for us was displayed through the act of sending His son as a sacrifice for us. Jesus very life was also a physical incarnation to show us how to live and walk in our lives with God. As you prepare for Christmas, may this gift from God, signified in a simple Christmas decoration, help you to remember his love for you and share that love with others.

Angela Atkins

*This is how God showed his love among us:
He sent his one and only Son into the world that
we might live through him. This is love: not that we
loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an
atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

1 John 4:9-10

DECEMBER 22

WHERE'S THE STAR?

In the early decades of the 1800s my great-great-great-grandparent John and Elizabeth Riggs traveled from North Carolina westward across the Mississippi River to Granby, Mo. They traveled only 333 miles west of the Mississippi and made their home. What they did on Christmas Eve was a *Sign of Christmas* that played a role in pointing a little girl from Southwest Missouri to Jesus some 125 years later. They had no idea that their tradition would pass on through generations.

Through random pages from Grandma Elizabeth's journal, I got a glimpse of Christmas Eve with their family. Grandpa John took the children outdoors every Christmas Eve looking for the star. First they would walk through the fields looking for the star and then sit around the campfire as Grandpa John told the story of Jesus birth. Then they all enjoyed a special treat of buttermilk pie.

John's son, Edmond, my great-great-grandfather died quite young but his boys continued the tradition of looking up to the sky to see the star, sharing the Christmas Story and then slices of buttermilk pie for everyone.

Edmond's son, Clint, my great-grandfather would gather his family on Christmas Eve and go horseback riding through the prairie fields looking for that star. Then, back at the barn, he would read the Christmas story and Grandma Druscilla would serve buttermilk and sweet cornbread.

Clint's son was Ivan, my grandfather, and on December 24, when our family gathered, Grandpa Ivan would take us on a hayride looking for that star! Granny Riggs would serve oatmeal cookies and hot chocolate from her worn out giant thermos into big, clunky white mugs, and Grandpa would tell the story.

Ivan's son Calvin was my dad. On Christmas Eve if we did not go to my grandparents we would go out in the backyard and search for the star. Later, we would go back inside and enjoy hot chocolate and pecan pie by the fire and Daddy would share the Christmas story in a cozy, warm living room. After my Dad died my Mother and I continued the tradition and we would go looking for the star. After my Mother died, I continued to look for the star with my cup of hot chocolate, from Braums, in hand, and, of course, read the Christmas story.

Be it by campfires, on horseback, hay wagons or car the tradition continued. The star, a *Sign of Christmas*, still points me to Jesus. I am so grateful for John, Edmond, Clint, Ivan and Calvin for searching for that star and sharing the magical story of Christ's birth.

Vickie Riggs

DECEMBER 23

A STAR IN THE EAST

MATTHEW 2:1-12



THE SIGNS OF
CHRISTMAS



CHRIST

DECEMBER 24-DECEMBER 25

CHRISTMAS EVE SIGNS

Christmas is such a wonderful time of anticipation. We anticipate the promise of time with family, who we don't get to see quite enough during the rest of the year. We look forward to our warm, cozy homes, lit by Christmas lights and gentle fires. We celebrate the coming of Christmas with caroling our favorite songs and recounting cherished stories reminding us each year of what is really important — rejoicing at the birth of our Savior, that glorious day which began the radical, humanity-alternating life of Jesus of Nazareth.

When I was a child, the culmination of all my anticipation for the joys and festivities of Christmas came on Christmas Eve. My family returned from Christmas Eve services with our minds filled with all of the beautiful Christmas songs which painted a beautiful picture of the simple manger bed and young Mary gently rocking her newborn son to sleep. We all gathered together in the living room for our Christmas Eve tradition. My family has a tradition where we always get one gift on the night before Christmas. This Christmas Eve gift is always pajamas.

I love getting my new Christmas pajamas, because they are the sign of all of the wonderful things to come: gathering together for a Christmas Eve movie, waking up early on Christmas morning, feeling overwhelming thankfulness for gifts given and received, and traveling up to Broken Arrow to see the rest of my family for Christmas dinner. Christmas Eve pajamas are the sign that Christmas is very near at the Smith house.

In a more glorious and incredible fashion, God left us so many Christmas Eve signs throughout the Old Testament pointing us toward Christmas and that wonderful night when the greatest gift of all came to earth, Jesus Christ. Christmas was near when the virgin conceived a child, when a young married couple traveled to Bethlehem, when all of the Christmas Eve signs were filled just as the prophet Isaiah and all of the Old Testament books alluded.

As you celebrate all of the festivities and preparation of Christmas and experience your own Christmas Eve signs, don't forget that the coming of Christ in the form of a little baby was the greatest gift humanity has received. What a great joy to know that our Heavenly Father gave us so many Christmas Eve signs!

Morgan Smith

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:
The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son,
and will call him Immanuel.*

Isaiah 7:14

DECEMBER 24

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're looking for: A baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:

*Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women
on earth who please him.*

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us. They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about the child. All who heard these shepherders were impressed.

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told.

Luke 2:1-20

DECEMBER 25

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

This song originated as a teaching tool to instruct young people in the meaning and content of the Christian faith. Roman Catholics living in England from 1558-1829 were not allowed to practice their faith openly. *The Twelve Days of Christmas* is one way they passed on their beliefs. The hidden meaning of each gift helped young Christians learn their faith.

The Twelve Days of Christmas refers to a twelve-day period, starting with Christmas, that is celebrated by the Church because the gift of Christ is with us for twelve months of the year.

The song goes:

On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me . . . The true love represents God and the *me* who receives these presents is the Christians.

The *partridge in a pear tree* was Jesus Christ who died on a tree as a gift from God.

The *two turtle doves* were the Old and New Testaments – another gift from God.

The *three French hens* were *faith, hope* and *love* – the three gifts of the Spirit that abide (1 Corinthians 13).

The *four calling birds* were the four Gospels which sing the song of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The *five golden rings* were the first five books of the Bible also called the *Books of Moses*.

The *six geese a-laying* were the six days of creation.

The *seven swans a-swimming* were *seven gifts of the Holy Spirit* (1 Corinthians 12:8-11, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4:10-11)

The *eight maids a-milking* were the eight beatitudes.

The *nine ladies dancing* were nine fruits of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

The *ten lords a-leaping* were the Ten Commandments.

The *eleven pipers piping* were the eleven faithful disciples.

The *twelve drummers drumming* were the twelve points of the Apostles' Creed.

Submitted by Chesca Baily

THE SI CHRIS

GIVING TREE

GIVING TREE ORNAMENTS AVAILABLE OUTSIDE
THE CHURCH LIBRARY AND THE CHURCH OFFICE.
RETURN UNWRAPPED GIFTS BY DECEMBER 15

THE HANGING OF THE GREEN

10:30 A.M.
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1

ADVENT WORSHIP SERVICES

10:30 A.M.
DECEMBER 1, DECEMBER 8, DECEMBER 15,
DECEMBER 22

SUNDAY SUPPERS

4:00 P.M.
DECEMBER 1, DECEMBER 15,
HALLOCK HALL

JOY OF GIVING

9:00 A.M.-NOON
DECEMBER 7

DEACON'S BANQUET

DOORS OPEN AT 5:30 P.M., DINNER SERVED AT 6:00 P.M.
DECEMBER 8, HALLOCK HALL

NORMAN CHRISTMAS PARADE

6:00 P.M., DECEMBER 14
JOIN US AT 5:00 P.M. AT COMMON GROUND, 324 W. MAIN ST.

G N S O F T M A S

SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS CONCERT

FEATURING KERON JACKSON

6:00 P.M.

DECEMBER 15, SANCTUARY

HOLIDAY LIGHTS, ADULTS 55+(\$60)

11:00 A.M.-10:00 P.M.

DECEMBER 17

**REGISTER IN THE CHURCH OFFICE,
FAMILY LIFE CENTER OR FBCNORMAN.ORG**

YOUTH CHRISTMAS PARTY

6:00-7:30 P.M.

DECEMBER 18, YOUTH HALL

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLE LIGHTING

6:00 P.M.

DECEMBER 24

NO WEDNESDAY ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER 25, JANUARY 1

FLC AND CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

DECEMBER 24, DECEMBER 25 AND JANUARY 1

WEDNESDAY EVENING

ACTIVITIES RESUME

JANUARY 8, 2020

Journal Your

SIGNS OF
CHRISTMAS
Moments



FIRST BAPTIST NORMAN

211 W. COMANCHE ST.

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