



Dear Friends,

The other day I arrived early to work at Harrisburg Area Community College. Since I was the first employee at the Tutoring Center, I turned on the lights and plugged in our Christmas tree, and as I completed these little chores, I was singing, "Joy to the World." I have confessed often that I cannot carry a tune, but I do "make a joyful noise" (Psalm 100:1). I turned around to see my supervisor standing in the doorway with a huge smile on her face. I was a little embarrassed, but she told me not to apologize; she really appreciated that I was so full of joy.

We often become so busy with life, medical issues, finances, and other legitimate concerns that we forget to be joyful. We need to remind ourselves to take a breath and count our many blessings. The old familiar hymn says,

*When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*

Johnson Oatman, Jr. wrote this hymn in 1897. He is credited with writing over three thousand hymns which have been a blessing to so many people over the years.

I know that I am blessed by each one of you; your faithfulness through the years, your inspiration to others, and the wisdom that your share make a difference in so many lives and shed Christ's light in a dark world that needs joy.

As we light the third candle (JOY) in Advent, let us remember to greet each day with a song in our hearts and a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord as we count our blessings. Let us sing everywhere we go, unapologetically and joyfully, because even if we can't carry a tune, we can carry on the tradition of praising our Lord.

Love in Christ,
Patti Miller



The Lord has done
great things for us,
and we are filled with Joy

Psalm 126:3



The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Psalm
126:3

The children's giggles fill the air;
Christmas is soon coming.
The sound of carols everywhere
Is found in song and humming.
A few white flakes of snow are falling
On shrubs and walks and trees,
And church bells to the faithful calling
Ring out sweet melodies.

We know that life can bring us grief,
And throughout all the years
We search for solace and relief
To wipe away our tears.
All troubles seem to wane and fade
In expectation of
The Christ Child in the manger laid,
Embodiment of Love.

God came to Earth, Emmanuel,
To heal and serve and teach,
To calm our fears and worries quell,
Put Heaven in our reach.
Within each heart, beyond our cares,
Christ can all doubt destroy;
Let's spread the Good News everywhere
And let's be filled with joy! Patti Miller

Announcements

~A Congregational Meeting will be held after worship Today to vote on the yoking proposal Memorandum of Understanding that has been available since Nov. 26th

~Financial Summary from December Consistory Meeting

General pledge November 2023: \$7,517

General pledge November 2022: \$11,472

YTD income: \$172,156

YTD expenses: \$203,534

YTD deficit: \$31,378

~If anyone is interested in joining the Homewood Auxiliary, please contact Linda Bixler. Membership dues are \$3 for singles and \$5 for couples.

Grace Outreach Activities

~The Outreach Committee decided to assemble lentil brown rice soup mix jars January 27. They will be donated to HACC. Donation of ingredients will be welcome. The recipe is posted on the bulletin board by the elevator with a collection box for ingredients under the coat rack next to the sound room. The goal is to assemble 60 jars.

~February 25, immediately after the worship service, there will be a gathering for anyone interested in signing cards for any Grace off site saints, college students and those serving in the military.

~Upcoming Events:

~The Bible Study Group will be show *The Preachers Wife* at 1:00 pm on December 20th in Fellowship Hall.

~Christmas Eve Service will be help next Sunday at 10AM .



Grace United Church of Christ

100 Fourth Street

Hanover, Pennsylvania 17331

717-632-1146

December 17, 2023 –Third Sunday of Advent

Gathering Music

Welcome/Announcements

Westminster Chimes/Prelude:

**** Call to Worship**

Lector: In the radiant glow of the Advent candles, we gather as a community of hope and anticipation. As we approach the third Sunday of Advent, we come together with hearts open to joy, for the Light is drawing near.

Congregation: Lighting the candles of hope and peace, we now kindle the flame of joy. In this sacred space, let joy abound and echo in our praises.

Lector: The prophet Isaiah declared, "You will indeed go out with joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands." (Isaiah 55:12)

Congregation: With joy in our hearts, we enter this place of worship, ready to receive the Word and to rejoice in the coming of our Lord.

Lector: Let the joy of the Lord be our strength, and let our worship be a symphony of joy, rising to the heavens.

Congregation: Amen! We welcome the joy of the third Sunday of Advent into our midst.

**** Opening Prayer:**

Loving God, as we gather on this day of joy, we lift our hearts to You in gratitude. May the joy that surpasses understanding fill this space, brightening our spirits and drawing us closer to You. In the midst of our worship, infuse us with the gladness that comes from knowing Your love. Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Candle: JOY

**** Hymn: "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus" 124**

**** Sharing the Peace of Christ**

Song: "Glory to God in the Highest" ~ Ernie Haase and the Signature Sound

Joys and Concerns

Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Pardon

Thank you for sharing your tithes and offerings

**** Doxology**

625

**** Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Special Music "Christmas Hallelujah" ~Cloverton featuring Grace Singers

Sermon Text: Psalm 126; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Poem: "Joy"

**** Statement of Faith** New Creed (on the screen)

**** Hymn: "Joy to the World" 125**

Message: "Advent's Joyful Promise Fulfilled"

**** Song: "Oh, What a Glorious Night" ~ Sidewalk Prophets**

**** Benediction**

Please remain standing to sing "A Choral Benediction" (Inside front of hymn book or on screen).

Postlude-

**** Please stand, if you are able.**

How you can promote unity in the Body



For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your quarrels, my dear brothers and sisters. Some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Christ." Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not!— 1 Corinthians 1:11-13

A man and his wife were walking through a park in Miami one afternoon when they saw a Cuban family enjoying a picnic. The family was tossing scraps of bread to a raccoon and saying repeatedly, "Oye, chico, ven aca" (Come here, boy!).

The man thought for a moment and laughed. He confessed to his wife that his first reaction was, "That's silly. Raccoons don't speak Spanish!"

Whatever our background, it's our nature to see the world through our own experiences. This can sometimes create a problem when well-meaning people from different backgrounds try to resolve conflict, each carrying his or her own assumptions for how the world "should" work.

When we look at much of the disunity in our churches today, this has been the crux of the issue: People from different ages, races, and backgrounds come together with their own ideas of how Christianity works. **But the truth is that these ideas are just that... ideas. They're preferences based on our own life experiences.**

To have unity in our churches, we as members must submit our preferences to a simple question: What is the best way to carry out the Great Commandment of loving God and loving people? So instead of just fighting for what seems right to you, question your own assumptions and be part of the conversation for how to move forward in unity!

Prayer Challenge

Ask God to help you see your opinions on non-biblical matters as secondary to unity in the Body of Christ.

Questions for Thought

Think of a time when a disagreement arose with another believer over a non-biblical matter. What happened?

How might having a unity-focused perspective on your own opinions help you the next time you encounter a conflict like that?

Second Sunday of Advent, December 10, 2023

Scripture Reading: Mark 1:1-8

*Don't equate the presence of God with a good mood or a pleasant temperament.
God is near whether you are happy or not. —Max Lucado*

One day long ago, a Black Monk, so-called because of the color of his Benedictine habit, rode an ox into town. He stopped near the town square of a small village in Tuscany, and seemed to be looking around, as though he had lost his bearings.

The town drunk, still a few hours from total sobriety, saw him and staggered up to the monk on the ox.

“What are you looking for?” he asked.

“I’m looking for an ox,” the Benedictine said.

The man stepped back and began to bellow. “He’s looking for an ox.”

Soon the baker and the butcher appeared and asked the same question, and got the same answer.

A crowd gathered and the murmuring increased. Finally, the drunk explained to the monk his confusion: “This is ridiculous. You are a man riding on an ox and yet you are looking for an ox.” He paused. “Did you hear me? You are looking for an ox? *You are sitting on an ox!!*”

The monk answered, “So it is with you looking for God.”

Advent is a reminder that God is with us. Right here. Right now. God got down to earth in a special way in Christ. His presence remains.

This is important to remember, because sometimes we have trouble sensing the presence of God. Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk, once observed: “God, Who is everywhere, never leaves us. Yet He seems sometimes to be present, sometimes to be absent. If we do not know Him well, we do not realize that He may be more present to us when He is absent than when He is present.”

Are you feeling a bit low and discouraged as Christmas nears? Be of good cheer. As C. S. Lewis said in this book, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*: “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito. And the incognito is not always hard to penetrate.”

You can’t get more incognito than arriving in the world as a baby! Immanuel! God with us!

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I remember that you are always closer than I think or realize.
Amen.*

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Sunday: Psalms 142-145

Monday: Psalms 146-147

Tuesday: Psalms 148-150

Wednesday: Revelation 13-15

Thursday: Revelation 16-18

Friday: Proverbs 8-11

Saturday: Proverbs 12-14

O CHRISTMAS TREE, O CHRISTMAS TREE!

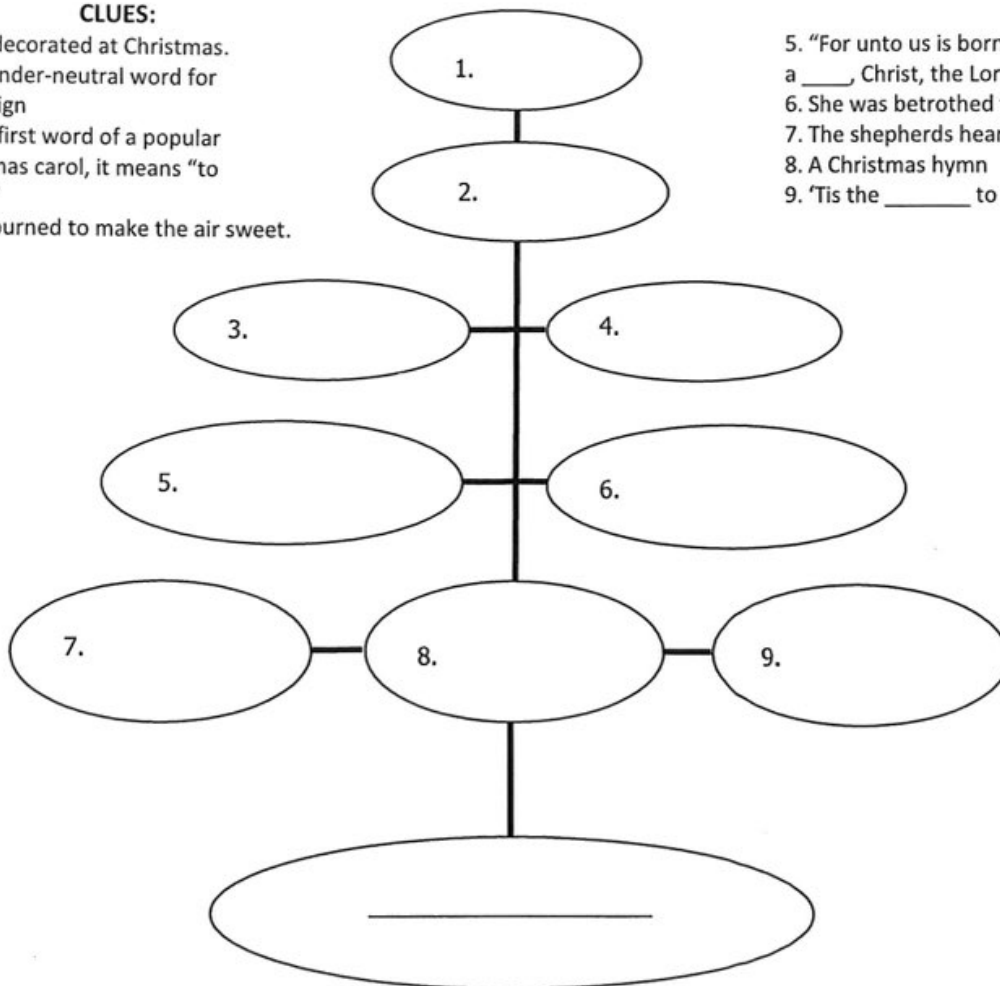
DIRECTIONS:

Read the clues and write the correct answers in the corresponding circles. In the white space on this page, write the **FIRST LETTER** of each correct answer and unscramble these letters to form a word pertaining to this season of the year. Write your answer on the line at the bottom of the tree.

CLUES:

1. It's decorated at Christmas.
2. A gender-neutral word for sovereign
3. The first word of a popular Christmas carol, it means "to listen."
4. It's burned to make the air sweet.

5. "For unto us is born this day, a _____, Christ, the Lord."
6. She was betrothed to Joseph.
7. The shepherds heard them sing.
8. A Christmas hymn
9. 'Tis the _____ to be jolly!



Answers:

1. tree
2. ruler
3. hark
4. incense
5. Savior
6. Mary
7. angels
8. carol
9. season

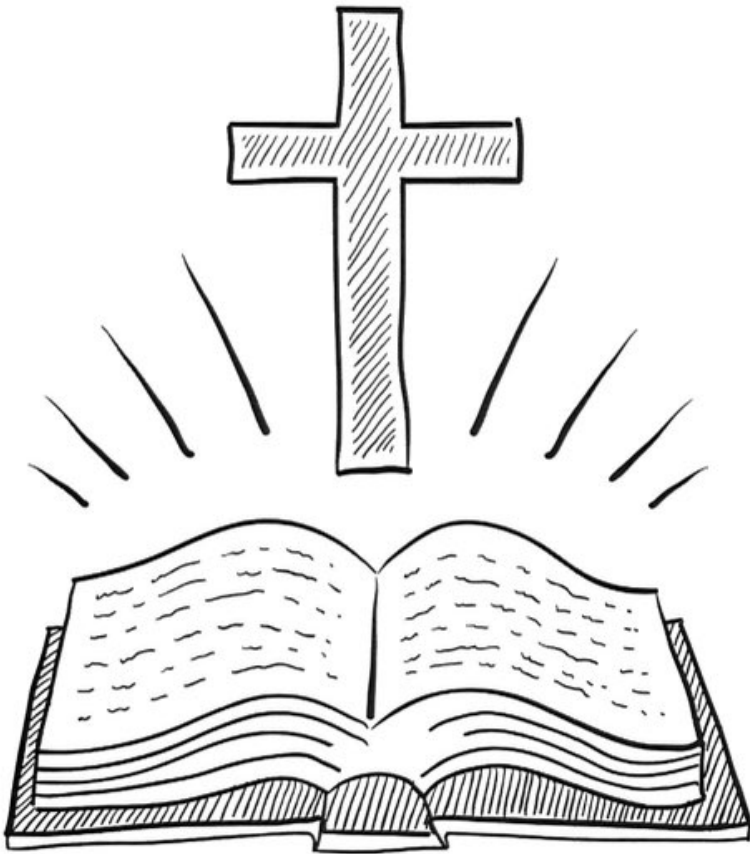
Unscrambled

word: CHRISTMAS



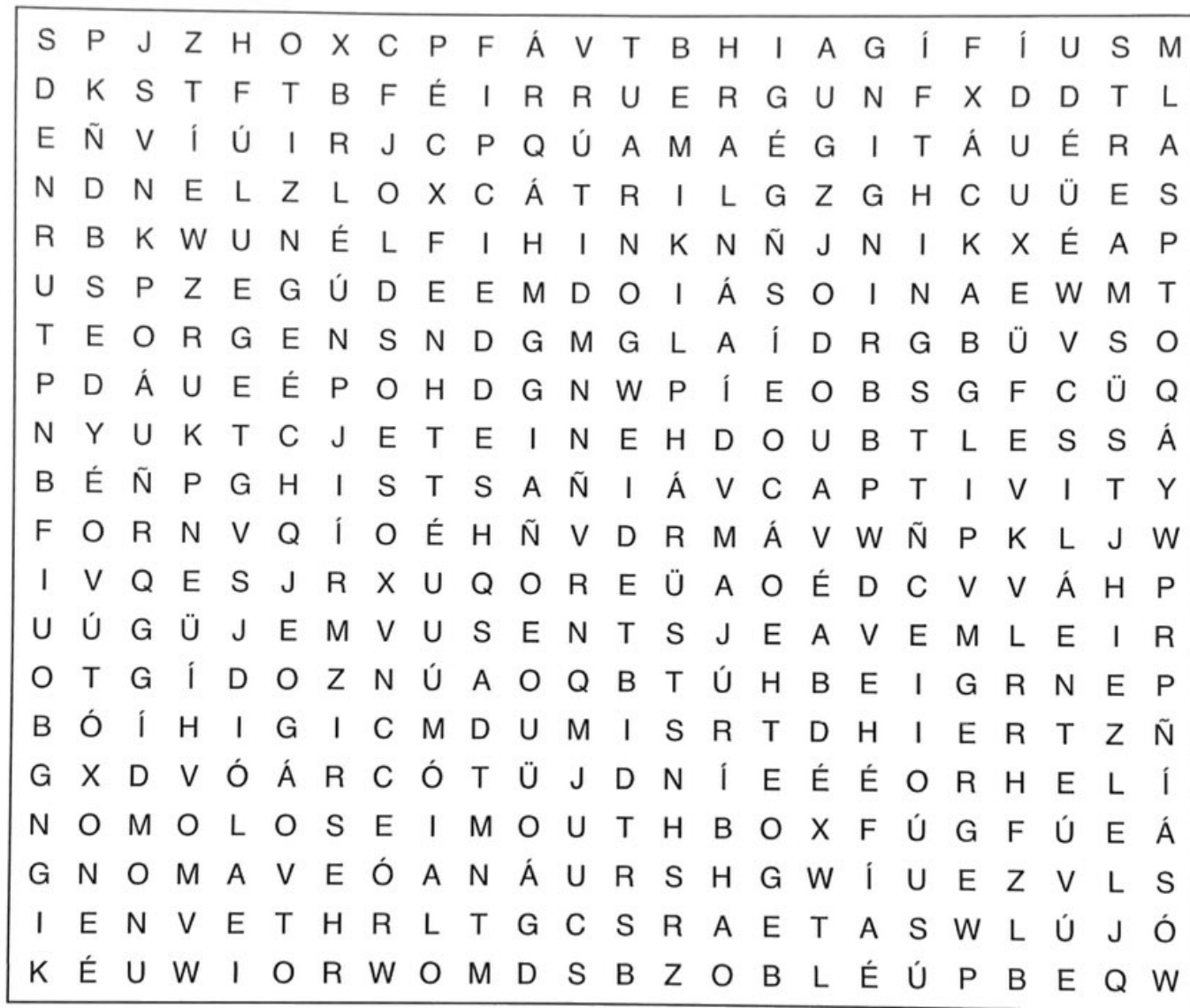
Advent

DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid.
Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.



ADVENT, ANGEL, BABY, BETHLEHEM, BIRTH, BLESSING, EAST, FAITH, FRANKINCENSE, GIFTS, GOLD,
HOLY SPIRIT, HOPE, JESUS, JOSEPH, JOY, LORD, LOVE, MAGI, MANGER, MARY, MIRACLE, MYRRH,
NATIVITY, NAZARETH, REJOICE, SAVIOR, SHEPHERD, STABLE, STAR, THREE KINGS, WISE MEN

Psalm Chapter 126



AGAIN
DOUBTLESS
HEATHEN
SHEAVES
THINGS

AMONG
DREAM
LAUGHTER
SINGING
TONGUE

BEARING
FILLED
MOUTH
SOLOMON
TURNED

BRINGING
FORTH
PRECIOUS
SOUTH
WEEPETH

CAPTIVITY
GOETH
PSALM
STREAMS
WHEREOF

DEGREES
GREAT
REJOICING
TEARS

John 1 6-8, 19-28



Created using the Words Up Games Word Search Maker at [WordsUp.co.uk](https://wordsup.co.uk)

AUTHORITIES

BAPTIZE

BELIEVE

BETHANY

ELIJAH

ISAIAH

JESUS

JOHN

JORDAN

LAMB OF GOD

LEVITES

LIGHT

LORD

MESSENGER

PHARISEES

PREISTS

PROPHET

SHINES

TRAVEL

WATER