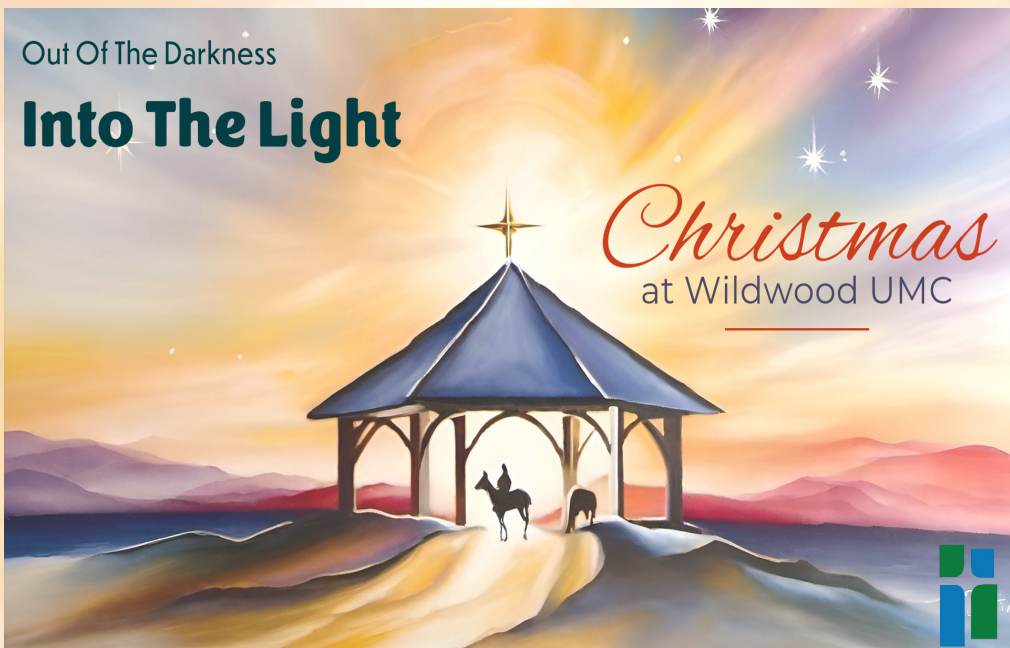


# Wildwood United Methodist Church 2023 Advent Devotional

Out Of The Darkness

**Into The Light**

*Christmas*  
at Wildwood UMC



WEEK 1  
Mark 13:24–37  
December 3rd

Embark on a heartwarming ADVENTure with our family devotional book, specially crafted for the season of Advent. This unique book is more than just a guide; it's a bridge that connects families within the entire community and beyond. As a testament to our commitment, we've prepared nearly 500 bags for distribution throughout Wildwood and the eager hands of each child in our preschool.

Inside this ADVENTure book, discover an array of engaging activities that will captivate your family throughout the month. Dive into the joy of creating and decorating your own Mary and Joseph travel kit, allowing these iconic figures to journey alongside you. From imaginative crafts to reflective exercises, this book is designed to bring families together in the spirit of the season.

For those seeking a more structured approach, an advent calendar is thoughtfully included, offering a daily guide through the Advent season. Every Thursday, join the clergy of Wildwood in a heartfelt video devotion, aligning with each week in Advent and seamlessly complementing the content of the ADVENTure book.

As you flip through the pages of this devotional treasure, may it lead you and your family on an ADVENTure that transcends the ordinary. Consider the journey from darkness into light, not only as we celebrate the birth of Jesus but also in the warmth of community. Let this ADVENTure book be your companion, encouraging you to step into the light and share the joy of the season with others.

I'm guilty. I get so caught up in the planning, shopping, partying, and trying to say yes to every invitation that Christmas Day can often arrive and I'm surprised. Surprised that it has come so fast and I ran out of time with my shopping. Surprised because it feels like the countdown to Christmas Eve worship services skipped a day or sometimes even a week. Surprised because when I have managed to overcomplicate this most amazing season, at the heart of it all is a child who comes into the world filled with love and grace. Awake to so many things, I fall asleep to the thing that is most important. Mark warns us that if we fall asleep (or fail to "keep watch") we run the risk of being caught off guard by Christ. Unprepared. Perhaps even unable to recognize him among us! Out of the darkness and into a marvelous light, we come preparing to welcome the One who is the light of the world.

## Questions for Reflection

1. What is it that Christ is awakening within you this Advent? Is it an awareness to see Christ in the stranger, more deeply engage in relationships with others through spiritual practices (i.e. prayer, reading scripture, attending worship, etc...), or maybe even an awareness to the needs of those who live in your own home?
2. Once you've identified those places where you feel the call to "wake up," what are you going to do about it? Can you identify three actionable steps you will take?
3. In what ways have you been so awake to other things in your life that you've become distracted (or fallen asleep) to the presence of Christ? What needs to change so that you can focus on your own spiritual formation?

# FAMILY ACTIVITY – Watchful Lanterns

## Materials:

Paper plates  
Markers or crayons  
Scissors  
Glue  
Construction paper (variety of colors)  
Craft sticks  
Glitter (optional)

## Instructions:

### 1. Read the Scripture:

Begin by reading Mark 13:24-37 to the children. Discuss the key points, emphasizing the message of being watchful for the coming of Jesus.

### 2. Lantern Craft:

- \* Decorate a paper plate with markers or crayons. This will be the base of their lantern.
- \* Cut out strips of construction paper to create the sides of the lantern. Choose different colors to represent the vibrancy of being watchful.
- \* Help glue the strips of construction paper around the edges of the paper plate, creating a lantern shape.
- \* Cut out small shapes or symbols representing things to watch for, such as a heart for love, a Bible for scripture, or a star for the coming of Jesus. Glue these shapes onto the lantern.

### 3. Watchful Messages:

\* Provide craft sticks and encourage children to write or draw messages related to being watchful on them.

\* These messages could include phrases like “Be Ready,” “Watch for Jesus,” or “Stay Faithful.”

c. Attach the craft sticks with the watchful messages to the inside of the lantern.

### 4. Glitter (Optional):

\* For an added touch, children can add a sprinkle of glitter to their lanterns, symbolizing the excitement and joy of anticipating Jesus’ coming.

### 5. Reflection:

1. In what ways do you think being watchful is relevant to our lives today? How can we apply the idea of watchfulness in our daily routines?
2. How did the crafting of the “Watchful Lanterns” help you understand the importance of being prepared for Jesus’ coming?
3. Share a personal experience or reflection on a time when you felt spiritually watchful or prepared for a significant event. How did that experience impact you?
4. In what ways can we encourage each other to stay watchful not only during the Advent season but throughout the entire year?



# Advent Travelers

A Journey Out of Darkness, Into the Light with Mary and Joseph

Embark on a heartwarming Advent journey with Mary and Joseph as your guides, moving Out of the Darkness and Into the Light this holiday season. Much like the beloved tradition of Elf on the Shelf, let Mary and Joseph take center stage as they travel through your home, bringing the story of Jesus' birth to life.

Scripture will be your compass as you follow along with daily passages, starting with Mark 13:24-37, where the theme of watchfulness sets the stage for the coming light. Explore Mark 1:1-8, Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11, Isaiah 9:2-7, Luke 1:46b-55, and Luke 2:1-20, each revealing a unique aspect of the Advent journey.

Every week, discover a new activity related to the scriptures, fostering family engagement and community connection. From crafting "Watchful Lanterns" to acts of kindness and community service, each day with Mary and Joseph becomes a step towards the light of Christmas.

As you journey through the Advent season, let your home be a reflection of the themes found in the scriptures – a place of joy, repentance, preparation, and spreading the light of Christ. May this unique experience become a cherished tradition, guiding your family Out of the Darkness and Into the Light of the true meaning of Christmas.

## Preschool - Kids Winter Event

(18months -3rd grade)

December 9th 1:00pm - 3:00pm



### December 3rd

**Scripture Reading:** Mark 13:24-37

**Activity:** Begin the Advent season by discussing the theme of watchfulness. Encourage family members to share acts of kindness, watchfulness, or preparation for Jesus' coming. Create a "Watchful Lantern" together.

**Place Mary and Joseph** near a small Advent wreath or a symbolic "Watchful Lantern" crafted by your family.

### December 4th

**Place Mary and Joseph** near the family Bible or a bookshelf with various Bible versions, emphasizing the importance of scripture.

### December 5th

**Activity:** Share a meal together as a family. Discuss your day.

**Place Mary and Joseph** near or on your table.

### December 6th

**Place Mary and Joseph** near a display of candles, perhaps on a mantle or table, symbolizing the light of Christ.

### December 7th

**Place Mary and Joseph** near a computer or laptop, research and learn about a Christmas tradition from another country.

### December 8th

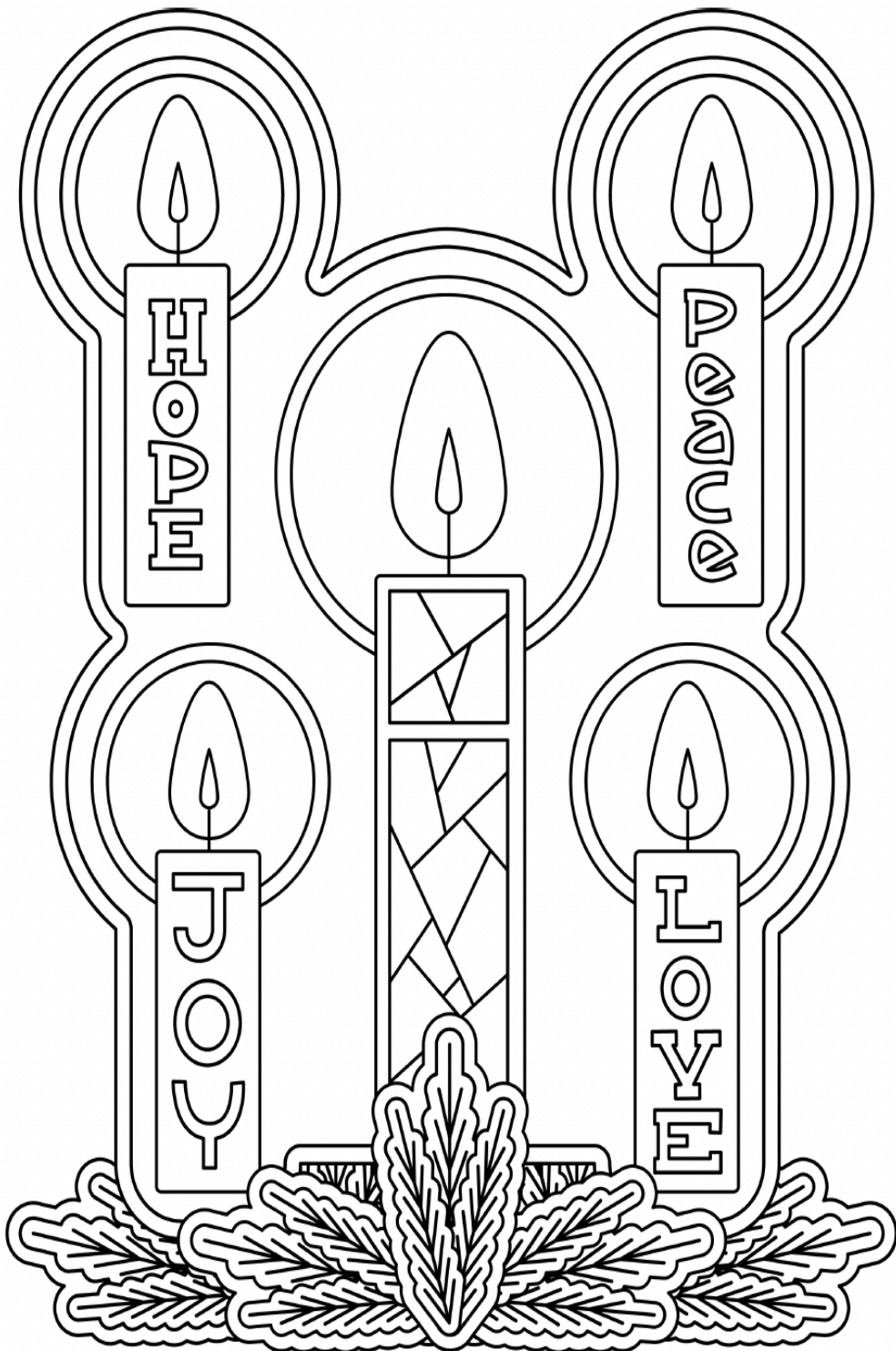
**Place Mary and Joseph** in a window sill to share the joy of Christmas with your neighbors.

### December 9th

**Activity:** Volunteer as a family at a local charity or organization. Discuss how your actions reflect the themes of repentance, joy, and the light of Christ.

**Place Mary and Joseph** near a map of your community or a list of local volunteer opportunities.







WEEK 2  
Mark 1:1–8  
December 10th

In the Gospel of Mark 1.1-8, the prophet Isaiah is quoted saying, “See I send my messenger ahead of you to prepare the way...” John the Baptist was that messenger who told people that one was coming who could baptize them with the Holy Spirit. The One that was coming is The Word—Jesus Christ who is the light of the world. This scripture leads me to the Gospel of John;

In John 1:1–5 (NRSV) we read. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

You’ve probably heard that Jesus is the light of the world? That’s what this passage in John says. The idea of light in biblical times was very powerful. No electricity and when one candle or lantern was lit, it had great impact in that it does literally overcome the darkness. The world was a very dark place metaphorically as well. Think of the violence we read about in the Old Testament. This violence was either attributed to God or portrayed as God commanding the violence.

This is what the people believed. I believe God put on flesh and came to earth to correct this misunderstanding of who God is. Jesus is light and that means so is God. Light is affiliated with goodness, growth, purity, warmth, and truth. We plan our days around the rising and setting of the sun. When Jesus came into the world, the world was in desperate need of light--someone to guide humanity into truth and goodness; someone to help humankind overcome the darkness.

I wonder if Mary knew that she was carrying The Light of the World within her? Her young arms cradled The One who would cradle the world with His love, light, hope, and joy. The strange thing is that not everyone wants to be cradled by Jesus. Many reject The Light of Jesus and don’t believe the Christmas Story even though they might celebrate Christmas—a time of

giving, family and celebrations—a birthday party! Many don’t celebrate the birth of Jesus intentionally, but unintentionally aren’t they really celebrating him? And somehow, somehow that light of love creeps into their souls. It might take time for them to recognize and acknowledge Jesus as the light of the world. In the meantime, we become the messengers of light to them. Not because we are the light of the world, but because we carry the light of the world within us. Every time we give, help, offer compassion and forgiveness, and love—the flicker of light becomes more like a flame.

## Reflection

Here’s our challenge: Be intentional this season of Advent, to fan the flame within yourself by giving, helping, loving, and offering compassion and forgiveness without expecting anything in return. And when we do this, darkness runs and hides. We are messengers of the light.

May The Light of Jesus within you light the way for others to find the true meaning of Christmas.

## Question

How will you be a messenger of The Light?



# FAMILY ACTIVITY – Cinnamon Stick Cross

## Materials:

Two cinnamon sticks of equal length  
Twine or jute string  
Scissors

## Instructions:

### Read Mark 1:1-8 together:

Begin the activity by reading and discussing Mark 1:1-8. Emphasize the themes of preparation and repentance found in the scripture.

### Form the Cross:

Place the two cinnamon sticks in the shape of a cross, overlapping them at the center. Ensure that the sticks are of equal length to create a symmetrical cross.

### Secure with Twine:

Take a piece of twine and wrap it around the center of the cinnamon sticks where they overlap. Tie a secure knot to hold the sticks together. You can wrap the twine multiple times for added stability.

### Reflect and Discuss:

As a family, take a moment to reflect on the significance of the cross. Discuss how the cross represents repentance, forgiveness, and the preparation of hearts for the Lord.

### Place the Cross in a Visible Location:

Find a special place in your home to display the cinnamon stick cross. This can serve as a visual reminder of the family's commitment to repentance and preparation.

### Family Prayer:

Gather around the cinnamon stick cross and offer a family prayer. Pray for guidance, strength, and a spirit of repentance and preparation in your lives.

## December 10th

**Scripture Reading:** Mark 1:1-8

**Activity:** Create a "Cinnamon Stick Cross" craft together.

**Place Mary and Joseph** near a table with crafting supplies for creating.

## December 11th

**Place Mary and Joseph** near your stockings and talk about acts of kindness that you can do this week for others.

## December 12th

**Place Mary and Joseph** near shoes or in the hallways, write notes of encouragement to someone in your family and leave it in their shoe to find as they start their new day.

## December 13th

**Activity:** Write and mail letters or cards of encouragement to friends or family members. Discuss how these acts align with the themes of joy and spreading the light of Christ.

**Place Mary and Joseph** near the kitchen, where you're preparing cookies to be delivered.

## December 14th

**Place Mary and Joseph** near your Christmas Tree or where your family hangs ornaments.

**Activity:** Talk about the different ornaments you have on your tree.

## December 15th

**Place Mary and Joseph** near cleaning supplies or trash bags, and say a prayer for those that do work to help clean-up the community.

## December 16th

**Activity:** Make some hot cocoa or your favorite drink and head out to look at Christmas lights.

**Place Mary and Joseph** in your vehicle.



# ADVENT Calendar

**1**

**Family Question:** What are some good and helpful things about light? What are some good and helpful things about darkness?

**2**

How did people see their food before the invention of light bulbs? Enjoy an evening meal or snack by candlelight. What do you notice about using candles instead of electricity?

**3**

Lights and sparkles remind us to celebrate. Set a three-minute timer: Who can find the most sparkly, reflective, shimmering, or flashing items in your home?

**4**

The Christmas story largely unfolds at night. God loves working at nighttime! Nocturnal creatures thrive at night. Look up three nocturnal animals. What features do they have in common? What do they do at night and during the day?

**5**

God often shows up in different kinds of light—a burning bush, a flaming pillar, gleaming angels in the sky—God loves to glow! What glowing holiday lights do you see outside?

**6**

Darkness doesn't always mean sadness or fear; God's presence is everywhere. On a map, identify places near the poles that experience long darkness. Who lives there and how do they adapt?

**7**

Embrace the comfort of darkness. Brew some hot apple cider, enjoying its aroma. As you sip, chat about other activities that make you feel cozy.

**8**

**Family Question:** Have you ever received big news that was scary and exciting at the same time? What was it?

**9**

Some places lack electricity, making studies hard for children at night. Find an organization that provides solar lamps to families with children and gift them with a donation.

**10**

Christmas is for everyone of every ability. Some do not use light because their eyes do not register light. Learn how those with visual impairments navigate the world. How can we be helpful to those who do not see with their eyes?

**11**

Advent is about light, darkness, and the shadows in between. Draw or paint something that has a shadow. Experiment with shadows using simple objects.

**12**

Advent is a time of waiting and slowing down. Dedicate some time today to read a book, write in your journal, meditate, or play with playdough and do it verryyyy sloooooowlllyyy.

**13**

Time can seem to crawl while we await good things. View or create a time-lapse video. What transformations do you notice?

**14**

List ways in which summer's brightness or winter's darkness blesses our lives. Thank God for both the darkness and light that we need to survive.

**15**

**Family Question:** When have you chosen to act with kindness and grace, even though it felt uncomfortable or a little scary?

**16**

Jesus is the light of the Christmas story, bringing hope and love. Our solar system has many planets and moons but only one source of light. What is that source of light? How big is it? How hot is it?

**17**

Did you know one side of the moon is always lit, the other dark? The moon does not have seasons, but Earth has the joy of changing seasons. Listen to your favorite songs of the season, and if your family likes to sing, sing along!

**18**

If you connect the dots of stars in the sky, you can find shapes that do not change. Shepherds, under starry skies, became familiar with constellations. On a clear night, can you spot any constellations?

**19**

We're said to be made from stardust. Find out how you are a beautiful mass of stardust, and thank God for taking such great care to create us from dust.

**20**

Christmas engages all our senses. We see twinkling lights, smell cookies baking, taste apple cider... what else? Talk about the senses we have and thank God for our abilities to sense the world.

**21**

Jesus called himself the "light of the world." In what ways was Jesus a "light" when he lived on earth? In what ways is Jesus a "light" now? Create a word cloud of your ideas.

**22**

**Family Question:** What happens when you first go from a well-lit place into darkness? What happens to your eyes so you can see even without a light?

**23**

In anticipation of Christmas, write down something you love about each person in your family and exchange these with each other on Christmas Day.

**24**

Attend a Christmas Eve service and prepare your hearts for Christmas Day.

**25**

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!** Reflect on the ways you have shown LOVE this Advent season.



WEEK 3  
Isaiah 61  
December 17th

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; To provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines; but you shall be called priests of the Lord, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. Because their shame was double and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot, therefore they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be theirs, For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and her offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.*

Isaiah 61

We know these words because we can see Jesus saying them to us. But these are the words of the prophet speaking to his people, Israel – a people who have experienced the annihilation of their country, their government and their understanding of religion. They have been forcefully removed from their homeland. Their kings and priests have been removed from power. And their Temple has been completely destroyed. Everything that defined them as a group has been taken away, every human structure is gone. All that remains is God. This is the good news.

It doesn't feel like good news. It doesn't look like good news. It feels like punishment from an angry God who set up a law that wasn't followed, so the people somehow deserve to be oppressed. It feels like vengeance towards those who took everything away but have now been conquered by another empire. We know these feelings. Something devastating happens in our lives and we look for reasons why. We blame ourselves. We blame others. We blame God.

But hope doesn't come out of blame. It comes out of forgiveness. It comes out of learning from the past, but also releasing it. It comes from recognizing how little control we have over things, and how human systems fail every time, even the ones set up under the most kind and generous motivations. It comes from trusting in something bigger than the next greatest thing, or the return to something that never really existed to begin with. Hope comes from accepting grace for our own shortcomings, and then extending grace to the shortcomings of others.

## REFLECTION

Look over your life and search for those times when you were pretty sure your world was falling apart.

How did you blame yourself for what happened? What do you wish you had done differently?

How do you blame others for what happened? How could they have made different choices, acted differently?

How has the event changed your life?

What would happen if you could truly and fully forgive yourself for any part you might have played in that time of your life?

How would your perception of the challenge change if you could let go of the animosity and anger you might be holding for another person or system who played a part in the event?

How is God making something new in you even as you consider this time in your life?

Forgiveness is not a simple or trite thing. It takes time to be authentic. As you celebrate Christmas with family and friends, remember God's love and grace are not naïve or simple things. They are characteristics we choose to see by. They are lenses which color our words and our actions.

God, in this time of anticipation, allow us to let go of those things which limit our love of others and You. Enrich us with the beauty and promise which comes only from you. AMEN.

## FAMILY ACTIVITY – Joyful Hearts Wreath

Materials:

Paper plates (one per family member)

Colored markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Scissors, Glue or tape, Ribbon or string, Hole punch

Optional: Glitter, stickers, or other decorative materials

Instructions:

Read Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11: Begin by reading and discussing Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 as a family. Focus on the themes of joy, restoration, and the beauty of God's promises.

Decorate the Wreath: On the front side of the paper plate, have each family member decorate their own "Joyful Hearts Wreath." Encourage them to draw symbols of joy, hope, and restoration. They can also add personal touches that represent the goodness of God's promises.

Cut Out the Center: Using scissors, cut out the center of the paper plate, leaving only the outer circular edge to resemble a wreath.

Add Glitter and Decorations (Optional): If desired, use glitter, stickers, or other decorative materials to enhance the beauty of the wreath.

Write Joyful Messages: On the backside of the wreath, have each family member write or draw joyful messages. These could include things for which or ways they can bring joy to others.

Punch Holes for Hanging: Punch a hole at the top of each wreath, near the edge. This will be used to hang the wreaths.

Attach Ribbon or String: Cut a piece of ribbon or string for each wreath and thread it through the hole. Tie a knot at the top, creating a loop for hanging.

Display and Share: Hang the Joyful Hearts Wreaths in a central location in your home, creating a beautiful display of joy and gratitude. Encourage family members to share the messages on their wreaths with one another.

Reflection and Prayer: Take a moment as a family to reflect on the craft and offer a prayer of gratitude, asking for joy, restoration, and the fulfillment of God's promises in your lives.



**December 17th**

**Scripture Reading:** Mark 13.24-37

**Activity:**

**Place Mary and Joseph** near a cozy reading nook or a stack of books.

**December 18th**

**Activity:** Create a Gratitude Wall with family members. Add notes of thanksgiving each day, linking this activity to Mary's magnificat from Luke 1.

**Place Mary and Joseph** near the Gratitude Wall, where family members add notes of thanksgiving.

**December 19th**

**Place Mary and Joseph** near a table with pens, stamps, and create cards to be sent to residents in nursing homes or a friend who needs some holiday cheer.

**December 20th**

**Place Mary and Joseph** near the area where your family displays Christmas cards.

**December 21st**

**Activity:** Plan a virtual Christmas caroling event for your neighborhood or friends, spreading joy and community spirit.

**Place Mary and Joseph** near a computer or device, symbolizing your virtual caroling plans.

**December 22nd**

**Place Mary and Joseph** Place Mary and Joseph near a display of candles, emphasizing the theme of light, take time to explore some Christmas lights.

**December 23rd**

**Place Mary and Joseph** near the your nativity scene, and discuss with your family the significance of Jesus' birth.

10:00 AM

**Christmas Eve  
Morning Worship Service**

*Christmas*  
at Wildwood UMC

Out Of The Darkness

**Into The Light**



**Christmas Eve Service**

3PM Family Service Designed for Children

5PM Traditional Service

7PM Traditional Service

Candlelight at all services

*Christmas*  
at Wildwood UMC

Out Of The Darkness

**Into The Light**



## WEEK 4

### Mary's Song | Luke 1:46-55

December 24th

If you're like me, you love it when Advent comes around and we start to hear the traditional Christmas season music on the radio, in stores, and in church Sunday mornings. Inevitably, we are likely to hear "Mary did you know?" by numerous artists and in varying styles. The version by Pentatonix is a family favorite of ours. And again, if you're like me, you love that beautiful song and its lyrics...at least for the first twenty to fifty times you hear it. But for me, over the season the song tends to become so overplayed (at least in our house), and I find myself crying back to the speakers... "Yes! Yes! She did know!"

Despite the downfalls associated with hearing the song too many times over the season, every time I hear it, I'm reminded of Gabriel's words to Mary and the song she sings in response while visiting Elizabeth. Gabriel let her know she is favored by God, she is carrying the Son of God, and that it is an immaculate gift from the Holy Spirit. Then she visits Elizabeth and sings with joy, magnifying and rejoicing in the Lord, thankful for the favor God has bestowed upon her.

Can you imagine being in Mary's shoes at just thirteen to fourteen years old? Hearing from an angel? An virginconception? Carrying Jesus? Now, if my daughter or my wife were to come to me with that story, I would think they'd be at least slightly anxious knowing I'd be skeptical and have many questions. If I'm honest, I wouldn't buy it and I'd be quite upset.

But Mary...faithful, overjoyed, confident, and assured Mary. She knows. She knows what is underway. In her song she is joyful in her calling. Joyful for the favor God has shown her. Joyful, knowing her Son will show mercy to the poor; he will scatter the proud and bring down the rulers from their thrones. Joyful he will feed the hungry and that he will fulfill God's promises.

For that, we can all rejoice...and joyfully singing along with Mary.

## Reflection

Imagine yourself in Mary's position. How do you think you would feel in that situation?

When reading Mary's Song (Luke 1:46-55), what words grab your attention most?

Reflect on what God may be trying to say to you through those words.

What brings you joy? Not happiness, but joy...even in the midst of our hardships?



# FAMILY ACTIVITY – Joyful Song Stones

## Materials:

Smooth stones (one per family member)  
Acrylic paint or paint markers  
Brushes or paint pens  
Permanent markers

## Instructions:

Read Luke 1:46-55: Begin by reading and discussing Luke 1:46-55 as a family. Focus on Mary's joyful and humble response to the news of her pregnancy.

## Decorate the Stones:

Step 1: Each family member will choose a smooth stone as their canvas.  
Step 2: Use acrylic paint or paint markers to create vibrant and joyful designs on the stones. Encourage family members to incorporate colors and symbols that represent joy, praise, and gratitude.  
Step 3: Allow the painted stones to dry completely.

## Add Magnificat Verses:

Step 1: Once the paint is dry, use permanent markers to write or draw phrases from Mary's Magnificat on each stone.  
Step 2: Consider dividing the Magnificat verses among family members, with each person responsible for one or more lines.

## Reflection and Sharing:

Step 1: Gather the decorated stones and discuss the significance of each design and Magnificat verse.  
Step 2: Share thoughts on how the craft reflects the themes of joy, humility, and praise found in Mary's song.

## Display or Share:

Step 1: Display the Joyful Song Stones in a bowl or arrange them in a prominent place in your home.  
Step 2: Consider sharing a stone with friends or neighbors, spreading the joy and message of Mary's Magnificat.

## December Morning 24th

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 2.1-20

**Activity:** Complete Joyful Song Stones while listening to Christmas music. Be sure to listen to "Mary did you know."

## December Evening 24th

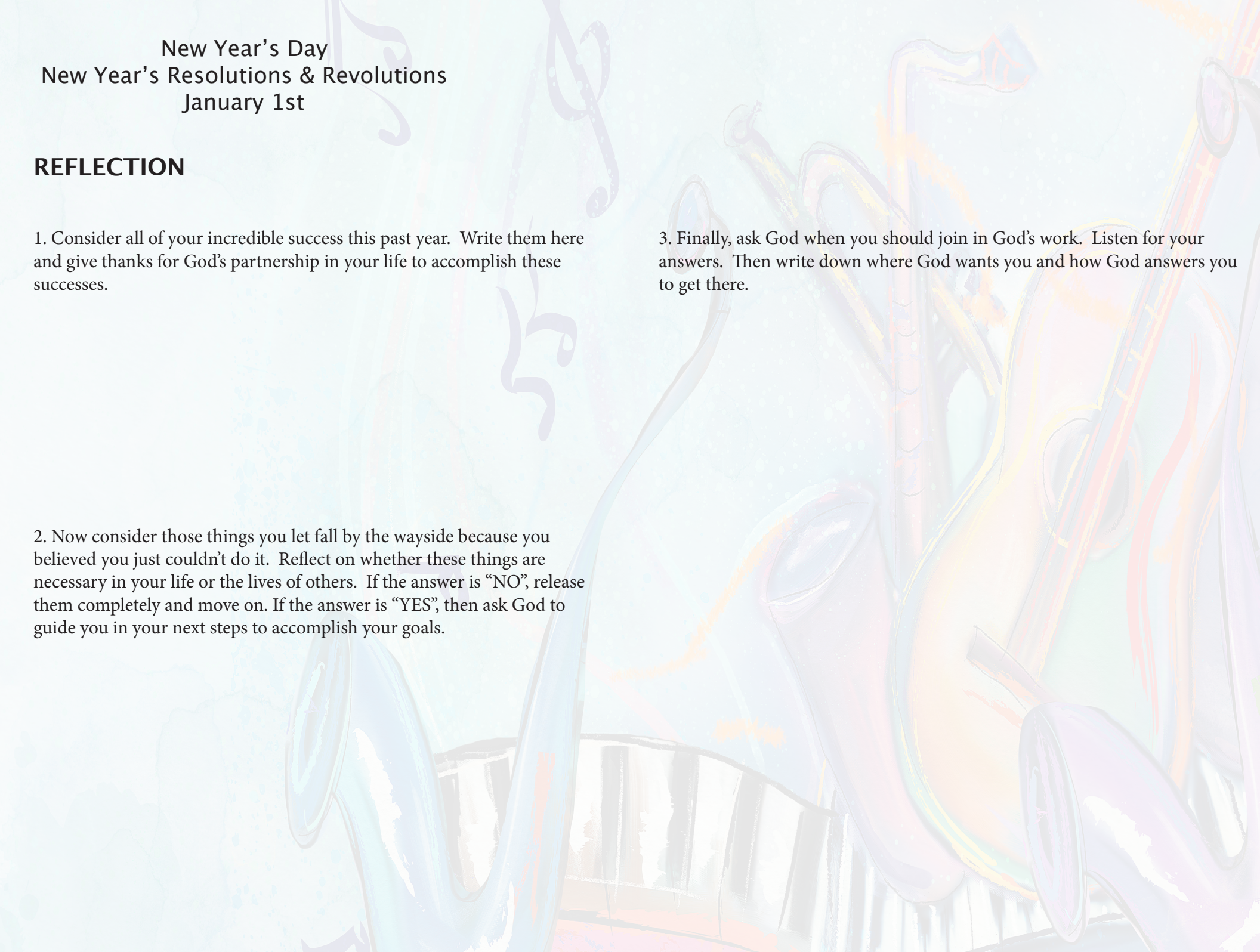
**Activity:** Read Luke 2:1-20. Recreate the nativity scene with your family and discuss the significance of Jesus' birth.

**Place Mary and Joseph** out in the open before you head to bed.

## December 25th

**Place Mary and Joseph** near the Christmas tree or the central gathering area for the family celebration, and add baby Jesus to the set.





New Year's Day  
New Year's Resolutions & Revolutions  
January 1st

## REFLECTION

1. Consider all of your incredible success this past year. Write them here and give thanks for God's partnership in your life to accomplish these successes.

2. Now consider those things you let fall by the wayside because you believed you just couldn't do it. Reflect on whether these things are necessary in your life or the lives of others. If the answer is "NO", release them completely and move on. If the answer is "YES", then ask God to guide you in your next steps to accomplish your goals.

3. Finally, ask God when you should join in God's work. Listen for your answers. Then write down where God wants you and how God answers you to get there.



# UPCOMING ADVENT EVENTS at WILDWOOD UMC

## Surviving the Holidays

**December 4 | 6:00pm**

Embark on a journey of healing with us at “Surviving the Holidays,” a compassionate one-night event tailored for those who have experienced the loss of a loved one in the past year and may find the upcoming holiday season challenging.

If you or someone you care about might find solace in this event, please visit [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org) to register.

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## Ornament Exchange

**December 5 | 6:30pm**

Women of Wildwood, please save the date for our ornament exchange! Dinner and childcare are provided.

Please bring a wrapped ornament (not over \$10).

Register @ [www.wildwood-umc.org](http://www.wildwood-umc.org)

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## Christmas Concert

**December 10 | 5:00pm**

Get ready to step into a world of enchantment at our highly-anticipated Christmas Concert on December 10th at Wildwood! We’ve rolled out the red carpet just for you, and the festivities kick off at 5:00 PM with a special reception hosted in your honor by our dedicated Wildwood staff. The highlight of the night? At 6:00 PM, the concert takes the stage, filling the air with enchanting melodies and festive tunes that will surely leave you with lasting memories.

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**Blue Christmas Eve Service**

**December 19, 6pm.**

**Christmas Eve Morning**

**10:00am**

**Christmas Eve Service**

**3:00, 5:00, and 7:00pm**

**Christmas Day Service**

**10:00am**

**Jazz Brunch Service  
December 31, 10:00 am**

Join us each Sunday @ 8:45, 10:00, or 11:15am for worship.  
Small Groups 10:00 - 11:00am

Rev. Rhett Ansley - Lead Pastor  
Rev. Dr. Deanna Young - Executive Pastor  
Rev. Janet Stilwell - Congregational Care and Connections Pastor  
Rev. Ryan Trushenski - Pastor of Men’s Ministry & Missions