

Dear Friends,

Merry Christmas! I just love the season of Christmas! I love all the songs, stories, presents, cookies, concerts, parties, Christmas programs, and all the other fun that comes with the season. At our house the joy of the season continues through Epiphany. My kids are on Christmas break and we have some down time to celebrate just with our family. I've included some of our favorite activities in this newsletter. Pick a favorite one and start a new holiday tradition. Leave your Christmas tree and decorations up and savor the season of Christmas and Epiphany! May your days be filled with the wonder and joy of the season!

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Associate in Ministry

## 12 Days of Christmas

The 12 days of Christmas are more than the silly Christmas song we all know and love. Many people think the 12 days lead up to Christmas but the actual 12 days of Christmas are from December 25th through January 5th. Christmas day though the eve of Epiphany. Epiphany is celebrated on January 6th. In the calendar of the church year, the 12 days of Christmas are the season of Christmas.

Here are some ways to celebrate the Christmas season.

- \* Use a white tablecloth or placemats
- \* Light your advent wreath. All four candles and the white Christ candle in the center
- \* Write the names of Jesus on ornaments. Here are just a few from Scripture: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Immanuel, Holy One of God, Christ the Lord, Lamb of God, Messiah, King of Israel, Bread of Life, Good Shepherd, The Way the Truth and the Life, Root of Jesse, Lord of Lord, King of Kings, and Morning Star.
- \* Make a birthday cake for Jesus
- \* Hold a baby shower for Jesus and bring the gifts to your local organization that helps new moms.
- \* Have 12 days of Christmas Kindness. Have your family practice one random act of kindness each day. Here are a few of our favorites: tape quarters to vending machines, laundry machines, or parking meters, delivering treats, leaving flowers, buy a meal for people behind you at a drive thru, be a doorman for 15 minutes, compliment public workers, make treats for the birds, write a note to your server at a restaurant, invite a special guest over for dinner. Come up with ideas as a family and pick 12 to do. For more inspiration check out: [www.kindspring.org](http://www.kindspring.org).



This information is prepared for you by the  
Northwestern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network  
for use by families and local congregations.



For more ideas about how you can pass on faith in your homes go to:  
[http://www.neiasynod.org/synod\\_resources/YouthFamilyResources.asp](http://www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/YouthFamilyResources.asp)



## Nativity Journey

Don't put your nativity away after Christmas Day. Keep your nativity out and use it as tool to teach and talk about Christmas. Here's a fun hands on nativity experience.

Start with putting up your manger/barn/stable.  
Add a few animals.

Shepherds and sheep are placed on a "nearby hillside." Near the manger but not in it.

All throughout Advent, Mary and Joseph journey towards the manger. Kids can take turns moving them each day- until they arrive on Christmas Eve.

On Christmas day, place baby Jesus in the manger and have an angel tell the shepherds Jesus is born. Have the shepherds visit baby Jesus.

During the 12 days of Christmas, the shepherds return home praising God and the wise men make their journey towards the manger from the east. Kids can move the wise men closer each day.

On Epiphany, January 6th, the wise men visit baby Jesus and bring gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then the wise men return home another way.



Here are some great discussion starters to use:

- ? Have kids tell the story in their own words.
- ? How do you think (insert nativity character) would have felt?
- ? What is your favorite part of the story?
- ? What do you think Jesus' birth means for us today?
- ? How can we show Jesus we love him?



Epiphany is a season immersed in the imagery of light. Light from the star that led the wise men to Jesus, Jesus the light of the World, and our call to be light in the world.

Celebrate Epiphany by:

- \* Making pomander balls and remembering the spices the wise men brought to Jesus



- \* Changing the candles in your advent wreath to white and continuing to lighting them each day



- \* Make cinnamon star ornaments



- \* Add star decorations to your Christmas tree.
- \* Save a present to open on Epiphany.



## Celebrate New Year's Day

Give each person a candle. The first person tells their favorite memory from the past year and he or she forward coming he or she someone dle. This until every



one thing is looking to in the year. Then will light else's can- continues candle is lit.

Close with prayer asking God to help and guide you in the coming year.