

CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST



Through Christmas Traditions

From the Brent Evans Family

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The Magic of Christmas

The magic of Christmas is something we experience individually in the development of our own personal relationship with our Saviour, with those we love as we glow in an increase of our shared love, and with those to whom we reach out and touch with the love of Jesus Christ. It is time to hear again the words called out by John the Baptist, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. ... Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.* It is a time of cleansing and reordering in preparation for His coming. He came to the world. We as individuals need to receive him. Our hearts need to be open, and not like the inn in Bethlehem, too full with other guests to give Him shelter.

*Let not our hearts be busy inns,
That have no room for Thee,
But cradles for the living Christ
And His nativity.*

*Still driven by a thousand cares
The pilgrims come and go;
The hurried caravans press on;
The inns are crowded so!
Oh, lest we starve, and lest we die,
In our stupidity,
Come, Holy Child, within and share
Our hospitality.*

*Let not our hearts be busy inns,
That have no room for thee,
But cradles for the living Christ
And His nativity.*

Ralph Spalding Cushman

So, let Him be reborn anew in you, and truly the Kingdom of Heaven will be at hand, for the kingdom of Heaven will be within you. Jesus urged us to learn of Him that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly.

Matthew 11:28-29 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest in your souls.

Have you pondered the thought that He was born in a manger for you? That throughout His life, He chose to live in humble circumstances so that He might reach you more easily? Picture him washing the feet of the apostles. As you view His life, is it not clear that He will come wherever you are? Meet you in whatever circumstances in which you find yourself? That if you truly seek him, He is ready to serve you? That you can't ever be too lowly for His loving care?

As the spirit of Christ grows within you, celebrate Him, appreciate Him, and make His way straight. Help Him enter the hearts of other children of God. Bear witness of His divinity to the world around you. Take that special care for one another that He would want. That's the substance of celebrating Christmas. Each of us can celebrate this Christmas season in its most perfect ways whatever our position and circumstances. The rewards are great, even the Kingdom of Heaven.

Isaiah 40:31 *But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ...*

As a family, we have prepared a list of some ideas you may wish to consider as you plan for this Christmas season. We hope they are helpful. We wish you a very special Merry Christmas.

Merry Christmas

Of all people on earth, we can most deeply say and appreciate the meaning of **Merry Christmas**. The word **Christmas** refers to **Christ** and **mass** (or the **Lord's supper**). That is the ordinance we have the privilege of participating in each week. The Greek equivalent was the word **Eucharist**, which translated means **going back to good favor or grace**. **Christmas, then, means going back to full favor with Jesus Christ**. Is that not what we do when we partake of the sacrament? All of the scriptures from the beginning of this world point to this ordinance and the sacrifice and gift of Jesus Christ that makes it possible.

Over and over again, through the years and hundreds of years, sacrifices were made as **all of God's people looked forward to the time of that great sacrifice when the Messiah would come to redeem his people**. It seemed that no opportunity was missed to teach and remind His people of the importance of that which was to come. When the children of Israel were plagued in the desert by serpents, it tells us in Numbers 21:8-9 that:

...The Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

Centuries later John wrote in John 3:45

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

And then we read in verses 16 and 17 these beautiful words:

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 God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

To teach Abraham, and through him us, what that love meant, Abraham was asked to sacrifice his only son. Can you feel even now what dread Abraham felt? The hand of Abraham was stopped at the last moment, and his son was spared, but **Our Heavenly Father so loved the world, and Jesus so loved us, His sacrifice was carried through and His gift to us was completed.**

During this season we say to each other, **Merry Christmas**. The word *Merry* in Old English meant a **special kind of cheer. A cheer based on courage and faith**. The type of joy that the angel announced to that small group of shepherds in Bethlehem:

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy ...

Have you ever noticed there is a comma in the title of the song, **God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen**? It is between Merry and Gentlemen. It is not Merry Gentlemen, it is God Rest ye Merry, Gentlemen. We could miss so much of the beauty of that song if we leave out the comma. A better reading would be:

*God give you joyful faith, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day;
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray.
Oh! tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy;
Oh! tidings of comfort and joy.*

As written in James 5:13

Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.

And so lovely expressed by Paul in Ephesians 5:18-19

... be filled with the spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

As we shake each other's hand and wish each other a Merry Christmas, we are in its deepest meaning saying, **Have positive courage and joyful faith in your being reconciled in good favor with Jesus Christ**. Isn't that a wonderful and special thing to be able to say to each other? Have joyful faith in your being reconciled in good favor with Jesus Christ. Let us say it to each other often. **Merry Christmas!**

As our family's gift to you we have gathered and designed 100 traditions and activities that can help you and your family celebrate the spirit of Christ during the Christmas season and throughout the year. We have included directions, scriptures, quotations, and stories to the traditions and activities to enrich your experience.

1. Establish Traditions

Anything you can look forward to and back on with expectation and warm remembrance. The best are traditions that have symbolic meaning. This might be as simple as holding hands in a circle while singing Christmas carols to represent family unity and a desire to support one another in living the gospel.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 ... stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught....

2. Start Christmas Season On Thanksgiving

As we feel gratitude and thanksgiving, our hearts open to the beauty outside ourselves, and we become teachable to the spirit. What better time than Thanksgiving to start the Christmas Season? With our hearts receptive, we can truly plan to have the best Christmas ever! Not just one Christmas day, but a season of days to become closer to God and His children here upon the earth. It is a good day to commit to having positive courage and joyful faith in your being reconciled in good favor with Jesus Christ.

Psalms 100:4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

Psalms 147:7-9, 12 Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; Sing praise upon the harp unto our God: Who covereth the heaven with clouds, Who prepareth rain for the earth, Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains, And herb for the use of men. He giveth to the beast his food, And to the young ravens which cry. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem: Praise thy God, O Zion.

*For flowers that bloom about our feet:
For tender grass, so fresh, so sweet:
For song of bird, and hum of bee:
For all things fair we hear or see,
Father in heaven, we thank Thee.*

*For blue of stream and blue of sky;
For pleasant shade of branches high;
For fragrant air and cooling breeze;
For beauty of the blooming trees,
Father in Heaven, we thank Thee.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

3. Read Scriptures at Particular Time Each Day

This could be an activity you do alone, or it could be done aloud with family or friends. The following topics and scriptures could be used for this special season of the year:

- Who the Lord is. (Psalm 19; Hebrews 5:9)
- Looking for the Messiah. (Isaiah 40)
- His birth. (Luke 2:1-20)

4. Food, Family, and Friends

Reserve some special foods to have only at this time of year. You might create a special Christmastime recipe book.

Exodus 5:1 ... Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

5. Special Table Decorations

Prepare and/or use special table decorations that symbolize the birth of the Savior, or living the gospel. This could include placemats with pictures or scriptures written on them, figurines, various Christmas decorations that have symbolic meanings (perhaps holly representing Christ's crown of thorns), temples, etc. You might use playdough or paper mache for some of them. One of the settings could include the scriptures as a centerpiece on the table, with the thought expressed that we should feast spiritually on the scriptures as we feast physically on food. Use special Christmas plates, silverware, tablecloth, or centerpiece that is used only during the Christmas season. A shallow box turned upside down could be used to elevate various Christmas scenes, such as the nativity. A practice many years ago was to spread straw on the table, and then cover it with a white tablecloth in the memory of Christ's birth in a stable.

Psalm 23:5-6 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Proverbs 3:3-4 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

6. Christmas Wall

Prepare a special bulletin board or wall on which to place Christmas themes, thoughts, stories, pictures, and Christmas cards.

2 Peter 3:13-14 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

7. Special Ways to Wrap and Give Presents

Plan special ways to hand out, or wrap, presents. During the weeks before Christmas Day, family members write loving and caring thoughts on the wrappers of each present. Commitments of service and support to one another could also be written. Name tag stickers or attached notes could be used. Also include testimony of Jesus Christ, and appreciation for His gifts. As you pass out gifts, the giver could take the gift over to the receiver and read the words written, and add an I love you and wish you a Merry Christmas and a successful New Year in the gospel. The same idea could be used for presents you send. It would symbolize that your presents are wrapped in your love and the spirit of Jesus Christ.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of light, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

8. BOOK OF CHRISTMAS PAST

As a project near the beginning of the Christmas season, reminisce about past Christmases. Write down some of the stories. Particularly, write appreciation statements about love and service that have been experienced. Appreciate these experiences as part of your heritage.

Deuteronomy 32:7 Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.

9. BOOK OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

Write down stories, take photos and, if possible, video tapes of this Christmas. When this season is over, include it in your BOOK OF CHRISTMAS PAST.

The original meaning of behold involved more than mere looking. It meant literally to hold fast to or grasp. Think of that when you read such scriptures as:

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

10. BOOK OF CHRISTMASSES YET TO COME

Plan to make the next Christmas even better and more special. Look upon needs and goals of family, friends, and others. Think what could be done to help each person enjoy the spirit of Christ even more next year. Write these ideas so you can refer to them at the beginning of the next Christmas season. You might even schedule them now on next year's calendar.

Matthew 20:27-28 But ... whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

There is an interesting bit of background to the story of the Good Samaritan. Recall that a man lay wounded on the road up the hill toward Jerusalem. A priest saw him, but walked on the other side of the road and passed him by. The priest would have been on the way to the temple to take a one week's turn in serving there. Because of the very large number of priests, this opportunity came only twice each year. We discover this particular priest's motivations when we read in Numbers 19:11: "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days." In other words, if this priest investigated and the man on the side of the road was dead, or happened to die during his ministrations, he would be unable to serve in the temple, and would have to wait for six months for that special opportunity to come again. Let us always have time to do the service the Lord would really desire of us.

11. A Quilt of Christmas Pasts

Organize making a quilt of Christmas Pasts. Each year, each participant makes one block. Even family members living a distance away could mail their blocks to a central place.

*My life is but a weaving
Between my Lord and me,
I cannot choose the colors
He worketh steadily.*

*Oftentimes he weaveth sorrow,
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper
And I, the underside.*

*Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.*

*The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver's skillful hand*

*As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.*

Author Unknown

12. Special Christmas Tree Ornaments

Make and use special Christmas tree ornaments symbolic of Christmas, family memories, special goals, or gospel principles.

- ❑ Each year, place pictures of loved ones on ornaments and hang them on the tree. As years go by, your tree will hold more and more memories of love, family, and friendship. Even distant family could participate by sending photos to each other. Maybe, on one ornament or sign near the top of the tree, include the following scripture so it can be seen clearly: John 13:34 "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.
- ❑ Make cookie ornaments in symbolic shapes, or with words or pictures illustrating the spirit of Christ or principles of the gospel.
- ❑ Each child could have his own personal Christmas ornaments that are packed away between seasons in a box with his or her name on it. Each year, children could receive a new ornament that they can open on Christmas Eve and put on the tree. When the children are grown and start their own homes, they could be given their ornaments with which to start their own Christmas tree.

The word ornament has an interesting history that can add to the meaning of the ornaments on your Christmas tree. It comes from a Latin word that meant to adorn, or add beauty to. Another early meaning was to set in order, resulting in the word ordinance. You can think of the ornaments on your Christmas tree, then, as symbolic of adding beauty to life by setting things in order through the ordinances of the gospel.

13. Evening Christmas Stories

Read a short Christmas story each night. You could use books from your public library, or you might decide to purchase a special book from which you could read each year. Not all stories need occur in actual Christmas settings. They just need to uplift our spirits and bring us closer to the love of our Saviour. Favorite stories could become traditional as beauty and strength are drawn from them year after year. You might read "The Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens each year. Published in 1843, its appearance gave a national and international rebirth to celebrating Christmas. It could do the same for you and your family.

*Books! Books! Books!
And we thank Thee, God
For the gift of them;
And the lift of them;
For the gleam in them
And the dream in them;
For the things they teach
And the souls they reach!
For the maze of them
And the blaze of them;
For the ways they open to us
And the rays that they shoot through us.*

*Books! Books! Books!
And we thank Thee, God
For the light in them;
For the might in them;*

*For the urge in them;
And the surge in them
For the souls they wake
And the paths they break;
For the going in them
And the song in them;
For the throngs of folks they bring to us
And the songs of hope they sing to us!*

William L. Stidger

14. Meanings of Decorations & Customs

Review, and possibly do research on, the meanings of various Christmas decorations or customs. For example:

- ❑ The Holly and the Ivy. The holly represents the crown of thorns placed on the head of Jesus just before he was crucified. The berries represent his blood.
- ❑ Candles. Represents Christ as the light of the world.
- ❑ Star on top of Christmas tree. Represents the star of Bethlehem.

You could connect the lights on the Christmas tree or outside your home with the following poem:

Hold High the Torch

*Hold high the torch!
You did not light its glow --
'Twas given you by other hands, you know.
'Tis yours to keep it burning bright,
Yours to pass on.
For there are other feet we must guide,
And other forms go marching by our side;
Their eyes are watching every smile and tear
And efforts which we think are not worthwhile,
Are sometimes just the very helps they need,
Actions to which their souls would give most heed;
So that in turn they'll hold it high and say
"I watched someone else carry it this way."
Hold high the torch!
You did not light its glow --
'Twas given you by other hands, you know.
I think it started down its pathway bright,
The day the Maker said: "Let there be light."
And He once said, who hung on Calvary's tree.
"Ye are the light of the world."
Go! Shine for me.*

Anonymous

John 8:12 I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness

Even customs from other lands that represent hope and love can be appreciated as representative of the spirit of Christ throughout the world and during any age.

15. Audio-Visual Stories & Music

Listen to and/or see special audio-visual stories, musical performances, or presentations. Check your television guide for programs that would enhance the meaning and appreciation of Christmas. Attend the special Christmas program telecast from Salt Lake City at your stake center. Check out from your ward library the Christmas program telecasts from other years or other inspirational programs. A copy of *Mr. Kreuger's Christmas* should also be available at each *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* ward library.

Mr. Kreuger examined the small nativity scene on his table, and began to think so hard of its meaning that he felt himself actually there, adoring the Christ baby. Love flowed from his heart as he recounted what the Lord meant to him.

Listen to *The Messiah* by George Frederick Handel. It was written over 200 years ago and is still a powerful force today in proclaiming the Saviour to the world at Christmas time. The story of how it was written is as remarkable and inspirational as the music itself. George Handel was at a low point in his music career. He had suffered major physical ailments, he was getting on in years, his music was becoming less popular, he was in financial difficulty. He walked the streets at night in depression. One late night, he arrived home and saw on his table a manuscript of an oratorio that was left there by a then insignificant poet. He read some of it, and then came across words that struck his soul.

He was despised and rejected of men He looked for someone to have pity on him, but there was no man; neither found He any to comfort Him. ... He trusted in God ... He will give you rest... I know that my Redeemer liveth ... Rejoice ... Hallelujah.

Suddenly the entire music for *The Messiah* was playing in his mind. He worked feverishly for 23 days and nights to get it written on paper, neglecting food or rest. When he finished the triumphant climax to the *Hallelujah Chorus*, with tears in his eyes he told his servant, *I did think I did see all Heaven before me and the great God Himself!* The last note written, he collapsed on his bed and slept for 17 hours. His servant finally called for the doctor, but Handel awoke before he arrived, and was found fully refreshed and eating a hearty meal. Handel dedicated the proceeds of all performances of *The Messiah* to the Foundling Hospital. In a performance in London, the King of England was so moved during the *Hallelujah Chorus* that he stood up and remained standing until its conclusion. The people also stood up, which remains a tradition to this day. Handel lived another 17 years, and although he ran into other misfortunes in life, including going blind, his spirit remained strong. At age 74, at a performance of *The Messiah*, he collapsed, and was taken home. He announced, *I should like to die on Good Friday*. On April 13, which was Good Friday as well as the anniversary of the first presentation of *The Messiah*, he died.

16. Listen to Scriptures in the Car

Play scripture and Christmas cassette tapes when in your car during the Christmas season.

O renew us, Lord, we pray,

With thy Spirit day by day,

That we ever one may be

With the Father and with thee.

Wordsworth

17. Reach Out to Others

Reach out and touch someone. Set aside a special day to visit or phone family and friends. Find out what is going on in their lives, and tell them how much you appreciate them. Bear your testimony of Jesus Christ.

*What made us friends in the long ago
When we first met?
Well, I think I know;
The best in me and the best in you
Hailed each other because they knew
That always and always since life began
Our being friends was part of God's plan.*

Anonymous

18. Uplift Others

Each holiday season, there is an increase in people suffering from depression. Plan and do something about it.

*If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.*

Emily Dickinson

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow....

19. Christmas Letters

Make it a tradition to write Christmas letters to family and loved ones. Express your love and appreciation for each person, and also your testimony and appreciation of Jesus Christ.

*'The world is waiting for somebody,
Waiting and watching today;
Somebody to lift and strengthen,
Somebody to shield and stay.
Do you thoughtfully question, "Who?"
'Tis you, my friend, 'tis you.*

Anonymous

20. Prepare and Send Special Tapes

Plan an audio or video tape to send to family members or friends. It could contain personal news, stories, messages, music, etc. Personalize it so each person you are sending it to is greeted or included in the talk.

*We get from people what we give;
We find in them what we bring;
We discover that the changes in them
Are really changes in ourselves.*

Anonymous

21. Have a Joyous Christmas Party

Play some games that get people to know and appreciate one another better. Here are two traditional ones:

The Minister's Cat. Players sit in a circle and clap steady rhythm. First player names a letter, and in time with the rhythm of clapping says, "The minister's cat is a (descriptive word starting with that letter) cat." If the letter in play is c, he might say, "The minister's cat is a *cute* cat." The second player must continue without missing a clap, and use another adjective starting with the same letter to describe the cat. Any player unable to think of a new word, or who can't keep up with the rhythm is out. In that case, the next player may start with a new letter of his choice. Game continues until only one player, the winner, is left.

Story Ball. Players sit in a circle. One player holds a ball, and starts telling a story. At a point of his choice, he suddenly tosses the ball to someone else who must continue the story without hesitation. Game continues with the ball being thrown back and forth to the various players until time is called.

Laughter is Like Sunshine

*A laugh is just like sunshine,
It freshens all the day,
It tips the peak of life when light,
And drives the clouds away;
The soul grows glad that hears it,
And feels its courage strong;
A laugh is just like sunshine
For cheering folks along.*

*A laugh is just like music,
It lingers in the heart,
And where its melody is heard,
The ills of life depart;
And happy thoughts come crowding
Its joyful notes to greet;
A laugh is just like music*

For making living sweet

Anonymous

22. Try This Experiment

Would five dollars or one hour of service do the most good? Try this experiment. Review the needs of people you know. Spend five dollars as a way of meeting a need or two. Then spend one hour of your personal time or attention to meet a need or two. Which made the most difference?

May God forbid that we should present our gifts and withhold ourselves.

Anonymous

Who gives himself, with his alms, feeds three,

Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me.

The Vision of Sir Launfal

23. Service Without Payback

Plan and do things for people who can never pay you back. Perform some service where it could make a difference.

Matthew 25:31-40 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

24. Have Your Home Declare Christ

Decorate your home so it is clear you are celebrating the birth of Christ, not just the winter season.

Psalms 9:11 Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.

25. Marking Height

If you have growing children (or grandchildren), mark each one's height on a garage wall each year. During that same time discuss and write down each child's growth in learning and living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

26. Make Your Front Door Special

Decorate your front door with messages or symbols of hope for the home, faith in Christ, and how you would like people coming in to feel.

Rev. 3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

John 10:9 *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

27. Cookies and Cake

Prepare cookies and cake with symbolic pictures or Christmas words on them. Share with others.

Psalm 34:8 *O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

28. Cookie Pool

Set a day when friends and family bake cookies in their own homes. They then meet together someplace to put their cookies in a common pool from which they draw out a share of a variety of cookies to take home and enjoy. Connect it with the thought that we are to be one in Christ. Good things happen when we share needs and talents. With a prayer, bless the cookies that they may remind us we are truly brothers and sisters in God's family.

O renew us, Lord, we pray,

With thy Spirit day by day,

That we ever one may be

With the Father and with thee.

Wordsworth

John 15:12 *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

29. Carol Other Houses

Possibly set a chain caroling night. One family starts it out by caroling another family. That family is then invited to join the first family in going to another family's house and caroling them. The third family is invited by the group to go to the next family, and so on. The evening might finish by the whole group caroling at the Bishop's house.

Before you go out caroling, review the story of the ark of the covenant of the Lord being brought by David to the capital Jerusalem. They had been without the ark for many years, and now it would be in their midst again.

1 Chronicles 15:25-28 *So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.*

1 Chronicles 16:9-10 *Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.*

The French word for Christmas carol was *noel* and originally meant a *cry of joy*.

30. Art Museums and Concerts

Visit art museums or attend concerts. Experience how artists and composers have tried to capture the spirit of religious themes. At home, you could look at art books and listen to recorded music.

D&C 82:14 *For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments.*

31. The Spirit of Christmas

Keep Christmas simple enough to feel the spirit of the season and the love of Jesus Christ. Have your priorities clear.

Alma 37:6 *... but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things come to pass*
....

32. Public Library

Visit the public library with your family or friends. Have each person individually explore Christmas themes. Gather together books, records, and tapes that seem interesting. Share some thoughts each person came across.

D&C 88:118 *And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.*

Jeremiah 29:13 *And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

33. Scripture Advent House

Make a scripture Advent House out of paper and cardboard. Make it so it has doors for all of the days of December thru the 25th. Behind each door write an appropriate scripture that you would like to memorize. Open one door each day, and try to have that scripture memorized before the end of the day. Make it a goal to have all 25 scriptures memorized by Christmas Day.

John 5:39 *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*

34. A Light in the Window

Decorate one of your windows, and include a light. A tradition dating back many years in Ireland was to put a light in the window on Christmas Eve so the Christ child could find his way to your house in the night. The light was also to be a welcome sign to strangers who might even be Jesus in disguise. The following is a beautiful poem from that era:

*On Christmas Eve a candlelight
To shine abroad through Christmas night,
That those who pass may see its glow,
And walk with Christ a mile or so.*

35. Christmas Theme for the Coming Year

Decide on a Christmas theme for the time between this Christmas and the next one. If doing this individually, review the scriptures for awhile before making your decision on a theme. If doing it as a group, discuss various ideas before making a group decision. Write the theme in a paragraph with supporting examples and scriptures. Attach it to the top of your main calendar, or post it in a prominent place so it can act as a reminder to everyone participating. Make it a tradition to do this every year, and the time when you select the new theme a very special occasion.

Isaiah 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord ...; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

36. Christmas Tree Decorating Party

Hold a special party of family and friends to decorate the Christmas tree. Instead of just decorating your own tree, gather as groups and decorate each other's trees. As groups, go to people living alone and help them decorate their trees. Also, have a party when the Christmas tree is taken down, and the decorations put away. Include promises of love and devotion to each other and the gospel through the year. Your Christmas tree can be an important symbol of joy at the birth of the Saviour. Read the following scriptures after your tree is decorated.

Isaiah 55:12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

1 Chronicles 16:31-33 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord ...

37. Christmas Day Blessing of the Food

Establish the tradition of a special Christmas Day blessing of the food at dinner time. Before prayer, have each person contribute thoughts they would like included. Make it a true, group prayer. The spokesperson then tries to include those thoughts in the prayer said for the group. He or she might want to take notes on the contributions before saying the prayer.

Matthew 18:19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

38. A Carol Before Sleeping

Listen to a different Christmas carol each night just before saying your nightly prayer and going to sleep. Christmas thoughts will create a peaceful and warm rest.

Isaiah 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee ...

The above scripture is even more descriptive when you realize the word stayed refers to the ropes and stays that hold a ship's mast upright, even in terrible storms.

39. A Christmas Music Dance

As a family or group of friends, have a Christmas music dance. Dancing is a means of expression, a way to focus feelings, and an enjoyable way to associate with people you like to be with. Dancing to Christmas music

can be a special way to celebrate the Christmas season. Did you know that the early meaning of the word *carol* meant *to dance in a ring while singing*? Carols originally were meant to be danced to.

Psalm 149:1-4 Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise His name in the dance: let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp. For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.

40. Lovely Thoughts Night

Gather quotations, poetry, proverbs, art work, musical recordings, stories, scripture references; whatever represents or generates beautiful thoughts and feelings. Witness to yourself and others that beauty comes from the Lord, and following His teachings.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He hath made every thing beautiful in his time...

Psalm 29:2 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

41. Beautiful Thoughts and Scriptures Book

Start a beautiful thoughts and scriptures book. Review every Christmas season, and take time to add to it. Friends and family could gather together for the specific purpose of adding to it, or each person could have his own beautiful thoughts book, and family and friends could bring beautiful thoughts to share with each other as presents during the Christ season. A way of adding beautiful thoughts to each other.

D&C 82:14 For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments.

Job 26:13 By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens...

42. Make a Special Visit to the Temple

Engage in a preparatory activity beforehand and/or an afterglow activity following your visit. Most of the activities listed above could well be used to help create that extra spirituality and depth of feeling that could make a difference in your life. For example, consider the Lovely Thoughts Night listed above. Would that not help you appreciate your experience in the temple even more?

Psalm 27:4 One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

Some early morning, go to the temple and watch the sun rise to represent how each new day can be a beautiful re-birth of Christ within you and a new opportunity to serve Him. Later, have breakfast at a resaurant.

43. Christmas Testimony Sharing

Set aside time for testimony sharing on Christmas Day; possibly just before exchanging presents, or just before or after Christmas dinner. Include appreciation of the blessings received because of Jesus.

Isaiah 43:3-12 Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, ... ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he ... I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour ... Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.

44. Traditional Patriarch or Matriarch Address

Establish the tradition of having the matriarch or patriarch of the family prepare and give a State-of-the-Family address. This could include family accomplishments, new marriages, births, moves, new jobs, life changes, interesting projects, members or friends who might be ill, and where family support could help meet the needs of individual family members. This might be concluded with hopes and wishes for the family.

Life is a country that the old have seen, and lived in. Those who have to travel through it can only learn the way from them.

Joseph Joubert

*Age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in a different dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Mosiah 2:1 *And it came to pass that after Mosiah had done as his father had commanded him, and had made a proclamation throughout all the land, that the people gathered themselves together throughout all the land, that they might go up to the temple to hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them.*

45. A Family Post Office

Establish a central mailing and information center for your extended family. This might involve setting up several family groups. You could have one composed of your mother's parents and all their descendents, another for your father's parents and their descendents. Initiate a project to get all names, addresses, phone numbers, and birthdates for each household. After organizing and compiling it, send each household a copy. Then, establish the tradition that each year during late November or early December, each household will prepare and send to the central mailing and information center (we call ours, *The Family Post Office*) a paragraph or two about their family's current activities and status along with a Christmas greeting. These are compiled and sent out to everyone on the mailing list.

Those who are absent, by its means become present; it (mail) is the consolation of life.

Voltaire

46. A Room for Mary and Joseph

Set aside a room in your home that can represent your willingness to take in Joseph and Mary when they were seeking shelter at the Inn. If it requires some sacrifice, so much the better as a teaching and learning experience. Fix up the room like you would, knowing who you were providing it for. Occasionally, during the preparatory time of the Christmas season, spend some time in the room and ponder the significance of what was to take place nearly 2000 years ago in Bethlehem. On Christmas Eve, go into the room and read aloud the story of the birth of the Saviour as recorded in Luke. You might sing a few Christmas carols with increased understanding of their meaning to you personally, and to all the world.

Luke 2:7 *And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for him in the inn.*

47. Christmas Appreciation Diary

Write in a special Christmas Appreciation Diary each day in December. Set aside time each day to write about things you appreciate, or incidents of other people showing you special consideration or love. Also, recall people in your past who showed love for you, and try to express the appreciation you still feel for those people and the love you were given. As you write each day, something close to magic will happen. You will remember and appreciate more as you dip into treasures that reside within you patiently waiting to be rediscovered.

Ether 6:9 And they did sing praises unto the Lord; yea, the brother of Jared did sing praises unto the Lord, and he did thank and praise the Lord all the day long; and when the night came, they did not cease to praise the Lord.

1 Chronicles 23:30 And to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even.

48. Do Unto Others

Explore in your own mind how you would like others to act towards you. Write it down in as much detail as possible. Include specific examples. Then, for one week make a valiant effort to treat other people in those same ways. If doing it as a family, or as a group of friends, select a particular week for the project, but do not reveal the ways included on your individual lists until the end of the week. Then, take time to share what each person was trying to do, and how it felt.

Matthew 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

49. Sharing Time

Set aside a special sharing time with family or friends. Sit in a circle, and give each person a liberal amount of time to share what is going on in his or her life; perceptions, goals, interests, fears, needs. After each person has had time to share, then go back to each person in turn and have the group give gifts of care and love by expressing love to that person, support for his or her goals, and help in meeting the needs or fears that were revealed.

Mosiah 18:8 ... and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they might be light ...

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

50. Pictures and Messages For Grandparents

Grandchildren could draw pictures and write messages on sheets of paper, and bring or send them to grandparents who could then place them on a special wall. Children could also do this for any elderly people in their area as a way of showing their love at Christmas time. Instead of posters and cards, children could do other arts and crafts. Certainly, the love that young children are able to express is especially significant during this time of year.

Blessed be childhood, which brings down something of heaven into the midst of our rough earthliness.

Henri Frederic Amiel

*Children, well we know them, never weary
Of their innocent surprise;*

*Waiting, watching, listening always
With full hearts and tender eyes,
While our little household angels,
Bright and golden in the sun.
Greet us with the sweet old welcome --
"Merry Christmas, everyone!"*

Anonymous

Matthew 19:14 *But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

51. A Birthday Cake For the Saviour

As a way of helping young children relate to the birth of the Saviour, bake and decorate a special birthday cake to be eaten on Christmas Day.

Luke 1:41-44 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And when is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

Some families have a tradition of actually bringing gifts to baby Jesus. They write a service they will do for others, and wrap it as a present to be opened after cutting and eating the cake.

52. Christmas Poster Night

Have a Christmas poster night. Each person or team is given a sheet of paper, and paints, crayons, or colored marking pens. The challenge is to make a poster that would represent the spirit of Christmas. Display the posters for the rest of the Christmas season. An alternative would be to give the posters out to friends or family as loving messages of the Christmas season.

Rings and jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only gift is a portion of thyself.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

53. Attribute Socks

Make attribute socks to use as Christmas stockings. Each person sews or writes words on their Christmas stocking indicating his or her best righteous qualities, or qualities he or she desires to develop during the coming year. Each year, everyone considers new qualities they may have developed or wish to develop, and adds words to represent them. The good items that are placed in the stocking are to represent the blessings that come from living righteous lives.

*Couldst thou in vision see
Thyself, the person God meant,
Thou never then would be
The person thou art, content.*

Anonymous

54. Be Ready To Concentrate On the Spirit

Get your shopping, and any house preparations, done early so you can concentrate and enjoy family, friends, and the spirit of Christ.

Preparing for Christmas

Is more than getting your house ready.

It's getting your heart ready.

M. E .

55. Plan to Keep Christmas Through the Year

Make plans to keep the Christmas spirit throughout the coming year. Get a calendar for next year. Gather family and friends together and talk about what keeping the spirit of Christmas throughout the year means. As ideas come up, write them on the calendar. If the idea applies to a specific day, write the idea there. If it is an idea you want to act on anytime during the month, write it in an open space near the name of the month.

Psalm 37:34 *Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee*

56. Take Off Your Shoes

Set aside one day during the Christmas season, possibly Christmas Day, and express your recognition of the sacredness of your home when dedicated to the purposes of the Lord, by taking off your shoes and not wearing them when in your house.

Luke 1:68-75 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

57. Dedicate Your House for Christmas Season

Dedicate your house for the Christmas season. Write a prayer of dedication, put it in a frame, and place it on the wall. Make it a tradition to write a new prayer each year. Save the old ones and read them as a remembrance of past Christmases.

Bless this house, O Lord, we pray,

Make it safe by night and day;

Bless these walls, so firm and stout,

Keeping want and trouble out;

Bless the roof and chimneys tall,

Let thy peace lie over all;

Bless this door, that it may prove

Ever open to joy and love.

Anonymous

58. Set Your Life By Christ

There is a story about a jeweler who had a large clock in front of his shop. He noticed that day after day a certain man would stop by his shop and check his watch. One day, the jeweler decided to go out and talk with the man and inquire about this habit. When asked about it, the man said he was in charge of blowing the noon whistle at the town factory, and wanted to make sure his watch was correct. The jeweler, somewhat amused, then had to tell the man that he set the clock by the noon whistle at the factory. Isn't it the same with trying to learn about life? We need to do more than learn from each other. We need a standard or perfect example. Take an evening to review the life of Jesus Christ as recorded in the gospels. Re-new your commitment to follow after him.

John 14:6 *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

59. Expand Your Circle

Consider your friends and associates. Now, think of one or more people you will include in your circle. Perhaps, even someone who has seemed unfriendly to you in the past.

*He drew a circle that shut me out --
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win;
We drew a circle that took him in.*

Edwin Markham

Luke 6:35 *But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.*

60. The Animals' Christmas

Take one day to pay special attention to the well-being of animals. The love you expend toward them will return to you manifold. All life has a part in God's plan and love.

Proverbs 12:10 *A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast*

*Tell us ye birds, why come ye here,
Into this stable, poor and drear?
Hast'ning we seek the newborn King,
And all our sweetest music bring.*

Whence Comes This Rush of Wings?

61. Behold the Beauty of the World

Take one day to fully appreciate the beauty of the world. Not only the world in its natural state, such as the sky and stars and mountains and flowers, but also the beauty created by the sons and daughters of God on the earth. If you can appreciate the beauty around you, know also that it must be within you.

Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we will find it not.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*To him all life was Beauty. The sun upon the hills.
The sweeping shadows, and the winding lane.
Morning, he loved, with dewdrops on the flowers;
Evening, with sunset and soft, warm April rain.
Friends he found in lepers stumbling to him,
Love in those who hate, grace in sinners' eyes.
Dawn he saw with all earth's new-born glory,
Twilight and darkness, and hope in human sighs.
Youth was his, and springtime, & music in the trees;
Life was his, and sunshine, & the murmuring of bees;
Joy in healing broken hearts; manhood's noble strife;
All the wonder and the beauty of a sacred human life.
He walked the common lanes, the city streets he trod,
And in his heart was Beauty ... the Beauty born of God.*

A. L. C. (Unknown)

*The little cares that fretted me,
I lost them yesterday
Among the fields above the sea,
Among the winds at play;
Among the lowing of the herds,
The rustling of the trees,
Among the singing of the birds,
The humming of the bees.*

*The foolish fears of what may pass,
I cast them all away
Among the clover-scented grass,
Among the new-mown hay;
Among the hushing of the corn
Where drowsy poppies nod,
Where ill thoughts die and good are born,
Out in the fields with God.*

Author Unknown

62. A Car Parade to Proclaim Christ's Birth

Together with friends and family, decorate your cars in ways to announce the birth of the Saviour. Just as people might do at a wedding to announce to the world their joy by driving in a parade of cars and honking their horns, do so to proclaim the Christmas season and Christ's birth. This could be done when caroling, going from home to home in a progressive dinner, or on Christmas Day.

Psalm 150 Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

Matthew 5:14-15 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

63. Extended Family Calendar

Each year prepare an extended family calendar that includes birthdays, anniversaries, and other important dates. Include family pictures for each month. Include pictures of ancestors. The calendars can easily be made by one of several low-cost computer programs. The family pictures can be photocopied in color. Working together to create the calendar will build extended family closeness and love, while the calendars themselves will remind everyone through the year of the importance of these eternal relationships.

*Where we love is home,
Home that our feet may leave,
but not our hearts.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes

64. Awaken to Words of Joy

Use these words from Isaiah 60:1 to wake up members of the family on Christmas Day or upon entering the room containing the Christmas tree:

Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

65. Special Christmas Morning Service

Hold your own special Christmas service the first thing Christmas morning. Include a prayer, song, talk, and testimony. Keep it short, but think how this would help generate a special spirit throughout the day. Remember this service during the coming year and draw from its strength each morning as you say a prayer and think about spiritual things before starting each day.

*Every morning lean thine arms awhile
Upon the window sill of heaven
And gaze upon thy Lord.
Then, with vision in thy heart,
Turn strong to meet thy day.*

Anonymous

66. Memory Walks

Gather around as family or friends, and share stories of past Christmases with one another. Discover how often quite simple things make such big contributions to our lives and fond memories. You might record each Christmas Memory Walk and save them as a family heritage.

*Two or three minutes -- two or three hours,
What do they mean in this life of ours?
Not very much if but counted as time,
But minutes of gold and hours sublime,
If only we'll use them once in a while
To make someone happy -- make someone smile.
A minute may dry a little lad's tears,
An hour sweep aside trouble of years.
Minutes of my time may bring to an end,
Hopelessness somewhere, and bring me a friend.*

Anonymous

67. Individual Scripture Readings

Before opening presents or partaking of Christmas dinner, each person reads or says from memory a favorite and appropriate scripture.

Matthew 4:4 ... Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

68. Christmas Action Chain

Determine to extend the spirit of Christmas throughout the next year. One way of doing that is to start a Christmas action chain. It is simple. You just decide on one action you will take in the Christmas spirit. You might decide to visit someone who is sick, or bring a bouquet of flowers to an elderly widow. It doesn't matter what, as long as it is in keeping with the Christmas spirit at its best. Write that one thing down. That is the start of your chain. Don't write anything else until you have accomplished the one link. When you have, date it, and decide on another action. Write it. Do it. Date it. See how far you can extend this chain link by link through the year. With each good action comes more power to continue on to the next. Maybe, you can even extend the chain to the next Christmas. You might read *The Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens just before writing your first link. You might even write these words of Scrooge after he rediscovered Christmas.

I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year.

69. Throw Away Sorrows, Fears, & Troubles

You might do this just before opening your Christmas presents. Each person writes any sorrows, fears, troubles, or grievances on cards. Participants could share what they have written, or it could remain private. Discuss the meaning of Christmas and Christ's birth. Then, each person tears up his or her cards and throws them in a garbage bag. This could be followed by hugging each other and rejoicing. Then open presents and enjoy the day. An alternative if you have a fireplace would be to burn the cards along with the traditional Yule log. Still another

idea is to use pine cones to represent what you are throwing away. Explain that pine cones are really seed pods. As you throw them in the fire, they will make a beautiful, glowing representation of what throwing away our sins, sorrows, and grievances can mean in our lives.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

70. Walk Where Jesus Walked

We can walk where Jesus walked without having to go to the Holy Land. We can do it by doing the things he would do wherever we are.

3 Nephi 27:21 Verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do

John 13:15 I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

To the naked, He is clothing.

To the cold, enduring warmth.

To the hungry, He is food.

To the lonely, a true friend.

To the weak, He is strength,

To the hopeless, a sure way.

To the sick, He is comfort.

To those afraid, a secure guard.

You will find Him wherever there is need.

M. E .

71. Kris Kringle and the True Santa Claus

The name Kris Kringle evolved from the German Christkind, or Christ Child, or messenger from the Christ Child. When transferred into Pennsylvania Dutch, it became Christ Kindel or Kriss Kindle. At some point, an r was added, a d became a g, and it became Kriss Kringle. The point is, we can consider Santa Claus, or Kris Kringle, or Father Christmas, or St. Nicholas as messengers of the Christ Child. Is there a Santa Claus? Certainly, just look around you and you can see for yourself. My father and mother were Santa Claus to me. They were able to bring the spirit of Christmas to me each year. I even now simply think about it and the wonders of Christmas unfold again in my mind and heart. You can be a Santa Claus. Anyone can. Santa (which comes from the word *saint* meaning one who is *pure in heart*) is someone who knows that Jesus loves the little children, and as a gift to Jesus on His birthday, he tries to make them happy.

I used to believe in Santa Claus.

Then, I didn't believe in Santa Claus.

Now I am one.

M. E .

Matthew 9:36-38 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples,

The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

72. A Quiet Day of Reflection

Set aside a day for prayer and comparing your life with that of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Write your thoughts in a journal and make a list of the actions or changes you desire to make in your life. Use this list during the coming weeks and months as you partake of the sacrament each Sabbath. Have it be a fast from the cares and interruptions of the outside world, so your soul can be nourished freely. On that day, no television or newspapers, and be free of business and work. Keep conversation to a minimum, and whisper as a way of showing that this is a special day for the soul.

Psalm 51:10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,

Mirrored in thy holy word;

May we imitate thee now,

And be pure, as pure art thou.

Wordsworth

John 15:7 *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

73. Christmas Card Album

Start and maintain a Christmas Card Album so you can enjoy the Christmas pictures and sentiments written on them again and again through the years. You might add any comments of your own about the people who sent them to you, such as identifying who they were, any interesting stories, and words of appreciation of what they have meant in your life. It will be quite a heritage item for you and your family in the coming years.

At Christmas -- the season

Of giving and sharing,

Of living and loving,

Remembering, caring --

Our thoughts bridge the space that

Would tend to divide us,

Restoring the warmth of

Your presence beside us.

May all the sweet magic

Of Christmas conspire

To gladden our hearts

And fill every desire.

74. Christmas Trees Through the Mail

Make fold-out Christmas trees. To do so, make a pattern for a Christmas tree that when folded in half lengthwise, would fit in an envelope. Make and cut out three identical trees. Place the first one flat and open. Place the other two tree shapes on top and tape at the folds so it can be opened to a three-dimensional tree. You could write sentiments inside and use them instead of Christmas cards to send to loved ones. It would be like sharing Christmas trees with one another. Receivers could tape them on a wall.

*The Christmas tree, the fairest tree,
On earth no rival knowing;
However small the garden be,
All radiant blooms the wondrous tree,
With every flower glowing,*
German Folk Song

75. Sighting the First Star

Make it special to spot the first star appearing in the Christmas Eve sky. Count the first star as the signal that starts Christmas. You might have special treats available, sing songs, and bear testimonies while you are waiting for the first star to appear. Make a joyful shout when you see it! The Jewish day started at sunset, so actually Christmas has begun. You might make it a tradition to read aloud the following song of joy from Isaiah 12:2-6.

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

76. Silent Night, Holy Night

Sit quietly where you can see the stars and enjoy the night. This might be outside if warm enough, or through the window of your house if you have a good view, or even from your car. The important thing is to be comfortable and warm so you can really take in the meaning of that most holy of nights when the Saviour was born. Consider the stars as lights on Heaven's Christmas tree that covers the earth.

Helaman 14:5 *And behold, there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld: and this also shall be a sign unto you.*

Psalms 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night

*While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.*

*"Fear not," said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind;
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.*

*"To you, in David's town, this day
Is born, of David's line,
The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord,
And this shall be the sign:*

*"The heavenly babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swaddling bands,
And in a manger laid."*

*Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels, praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:*

*"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace:
Good will henceforth from Heaven to men
Begin and never cease."*

Nahum Tate

77. Christmas Season Fast

Set aside one day for a Christmas fast. Refrain from eating until evening. Then, have a simple meal and reflect on the importance of taking care of people in need. Connect your special Christmas fast with the Christmas carol about *Good King Wenceslas*. Ponder the fact that in comparison to others of God's children, you are rich. Sing the song, and have it remind you from that time forward of your own responsibility to those in need.

*Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep and crisp and even;
Brightly shone the moon that night,*

*Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gathering winter fuel.*

*"Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou knowest it, telling:
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain,
Right against the forest fence,
By Saint Agnes's fountain."*

*"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine logs hither;
Thou and I will see him dine
When we bear them thither."
Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament
And the bitter weather.*

*"Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger:
Fails my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer."*

*"Mark my footsteps, my good page,
Tread thou in them boldly:
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."*

*In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,*

*Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.*

Also take time during your fast to contemplate fully those around you that need a servant of the Lord to attend to their needs.

The Little Match Girl

This is a story told by Hans Christian Anderson. Only the last half of the story is given here. A little girl was out late at night in the freezing cold without shoes or a proper coat during the holiday season to sell matches. No one bought from her, and she huddled against a wall to try to keep warm.

Her little hands were almost benumbed with the cold. Ah! a match might do her good, if she could only draw one from the bundle, and rub it against the wall, and warm her hands at it. She drew one out. R-r-atch! how it sputtered and burned! It was a warm bright flame, like a little candle, when she held her hands over it; it was a wonderful little light! It really seemed to the little girl as if she sat before a great polished stove, with bright brass feet and a brass cover. How the fire burned! how comfortable it was! but the little flame went out, the stove vanished, and she had only the remains of the burned match in her hand.

A second was rubbed against the wall. It burned up, and when the light fell upon the wall it became transparent like a thin veil, and she could see through it into the room. On the table a snow-white cloth was spread; upon it stood a shining dinner service; the roast goose smoked gloriously, stuffed with apples and dried plums. And what was still more splendid to behold, the goose hopped down from the dish, and waddled along the floor, with a knife and fork in its breast to the little girl. Then the match went out, and only the thick, damp, cold wall was before her. She lighted another match. Then she was sitting under a beautiful Christmas tree; it was greater and more ornamented than the one she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant's. Thousands of candles burned upon the green branches, and colored pictures like those in the print shops looked down upon them. The little girl stretched forth her hand toward them; then the match sent out. The Christmas lights mounted higher. She saw them now as stars in the sky: one of them fell down, forming a long line of fire.

"Now some one is dying," thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only person who had loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star fell down a soul mounted up to God.

She rubbed another match against the wall: it became bright again, & in the brightness the old grandmother stood clear and shining, mild and lovely.

"Grandmother!" cried the child, "O! take me with you! I know you will go when the match is burned out. You will vanish like the warm fire, the warm food, and the great, glorious Christmas tree!"

And she hastily rubbed the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to hold her grandmother fast. And the matches burned with such a glow that it became brighter than in the middle of the day; grandmother had never been so large or so beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and both flew in brightness and joy above the earth, very, very high, and up there was neither cold, nor hunger, nor care -- they were with God.

But in the corner, leaning against the wall, sat the poor girl with red cheeks and smiling mouth, frozen to death on the last evening of the Old Year. The New Year's sun rose upon a little corpse! The child sat there, stiff and cold, with the matches, of which one bundle was burned. "She wanted to warm herself,"

the people said. No one imagined what a beautiful thing she had seen, and in what glory she had gone in with her grandmother to the New Year's Day.

There are others like the little match girl out there. Some are young, some are old, and are of both sexes. Heavenly Father at some point will take them back to His presence with love. But until that day, should we not seek them out and give them the warmth and love they need while on the earth? Place a box of matches on a shelf where you can see it, and it can act as a reminder of what needs to be done.

Moroni &:47 Charity is the pure love of Christ and who is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

78. See the Lights

Drive around and see the Christmas lights and decorations. Contemplate that the people in those homes have a yearning for God's love and are reaching out to touch and experience the spirit of Christmas. Commit to doing your part to make that happen in as many lives as you can.

Psalms 8:3-5 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, And hast crowned him with glory and honor.

There is a story that Sir Harry Lauder used to tell about an old lamplighter in a small community where he lived as a boy. When dusk would come, the old man would make the rounds with his ladder and light each street lamp. After awhile, the lamplighter would disappear in the night, but Sir Harry said, *I could always tell which way he had gone because of the lamps he lighted.*

79. Christmas Treasure Box

Each Christmas, save one or more items as a reminder of the specialness of that Christmas. Keep it in a treasure box. Add to it each year, and on a particular evening a day or two after Christmas as you select new items to add, go through the old and remember again the blessings of the past. As the Christmas season comes to its close, enjoy the afterglow as you do the embers of a campfire at the end of a pleasant evening.

Just as with many other things, memories keep better in containers. Anything can be used to keep a memory fresh. It must merely be told to do so.

M.E.

80. Christmas Alphabet.

Go through the alphabet, and write what each letter stands for in a Christmas way. You might do this as a large poster, and place on the wall. Here is an example from an unknown author, but it is more special to make your own.

- A** is for Animals who shared the stable.
- B** is for the Babe with their manger for cradle.
- C** is for the Carols so blithe and so gay.
- D** is for December, the twenty-fifth day.
- E** is for Even when we're all so excited.
- F** is for the Fun when the tree's at last lighted.
- G** is the Goose which you all know is fat.

H is for the Holly you stick in your hat.
I is for the Ivy that clings to the wall.
J is for Jesus, the cause of it all.
K is for the Kindness begot by this feast.
L is the Light shining way in the east.
M is for the Mistletoe, all green and white.
N is for the Noels we sing Christmas night.
O is for the Oxen, the first to adore Him.
P is for the Presents Wise Men laid before Him.
Q is for the Queerness that this should have been near two thousand
years before you were seen.
R is for the Reindeer leaping the roofs.
S is for the Stockings that Santa Claus stuffs.
T is for the Toys, the Tinsel, the Tree.
U is for Us -- the whole family.
V is for Visitors bringing us cheer.
W is Welcome to the happy New Year.
X Y Z bother me! All I can say is,
This is the end of my Christmas lay.
So now to you all, wherever you be,
A merry, merry Christmas, and many may you see!

81. Christmas is a Time

Place a large sheet of paper on a wall, and write at the top, *Christmas is a Time*: Write statements about Christmas below it. When friends and family come to visit, have them add their own thoughts and feelings. Try to have this Christmas reflect the best of the thoughts expressed.

Psalms 38:15 *For in thee, O Lord, do I hope*

Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

82. Display Reminders of Powerful Stories

Place a crutch in the corner of the room as a reminder of Tiny Tim's crutch from the *Christmas Carol*. A comb and a watch chain on a shelf could bring to mind the *Gift of the Magi*. Do the same for any story that has the power to generate loving and righteous emotions. The following true pioneer story effected me, and a red shawl placed somewhere in the room could act as a reminder of parental love and the importance of perspective in my own life.

Arthur Parker was a pioneer boy, just six years old, crossing the wide expanse on the way to Utah in a handcart company. When a sudden thunderstorm struck, there was a great hurry to make camp. It was then discovered to the distress of his parents, that Arthur was missing. For two days, the company searched, but to no avail. Being able to wait no longer, the pioneers started west again. Arthur's father prepared to go back along the trail alone and search for his beloved son once more. His wife pinned a bright shawl around his shoulders, and told him: "If you find our boy dead, wrap him in this shawl to bury him, but if you find him alive, wave this shawl as a flag when you approach me that I might know as early as possible that our son is alive." At sundown, three days later, she and her other children saw in the distance the father waving the red shawl.

Adapted from *Handcarts to Zion* by LeRoy Hafen

83. A Bed for Baby Jesus

Set a nativity scene, but wait until Christmas morning to place the baby Jesus in it. Decide you will make the manger bed soft for Him. Put one piece of straw in the manger for each good deed you do. Let the family all work together doing good deeds to make the manger bed really soft before Christmas morning.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,

Descend to us, we pray;

Cast out our sin, and enter in,

Be born in us to-day.

We hear the Christmas angels

The great glad tidings tell:

Oh, come to us, abide with us,

Our Lord Emmanuel!

Phillips Brooks

84. A Christmas Basket

Prepare a Christmas basket, and include a small symbol representing each of the following:

The STAR: A heavenly sign of the Saviour's birth. The shining hope of mankind.

RED: The first color of Christmas symbolizing the Saviour's sacrifice for all.

The FIR TREE: Evergreen - - The second color of Christmas shows everlasting life. The needles point heavenward.

The BELL: Rings out to guide lost sheep back to the fold, - - Signifying that all are precious in the eyes of the Lord.

The CANDLE: Mirror of starlight reflecting our thanks for the star of Bethlehem.

LIFT BOW: Tied as we should all be tied together in bonds of good will forever.

CANDY CANE: The shepherds' crook used to bring lambs back into the fold.
- - A reminder that we are all our brothers' keepers.

The WREATH: A symbol of the never ending eternal nature of love - -
Having no beginning and no end.

The LAMB: To remind us that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God and saviour
of us all.

Present the symbols to your family and explain the meaning of each one. Place the basket of symbols near the Christmas tree as a reminder of the meaning of Christmas.

85. Discover Your Special Gifts and Give Them

Each of us has gifts and talents. Take time to contemplate yours, and how they can benefit others.

Each of us has a gift which is peculiar to him, and which worthily used will be a gift also to his race.
Ruskin

1 Corinthians 12:4, 8-11 *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ... For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

86. A Special "Merry" Day

The word merry is old English for a special type of positive courage or joyful faith. How would you look and act if you were fully feeling this kind of merry? Would you radiate the feeling with smiles? Select a particular day to radiate that feeling to everyone you meet. Afterwards, take some time and think of the effect it had on yourself and others.

A happy man or woman is a radiant focus of goodwill, and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted.

Robert Louis Stevenson

*You only gave a smile
Which cost you not a thing,
And yet it made me rich
As any ancient king.*

*You only gave me a smile
My name you did not call,
And yet it made my day
The brightest day of all.*

*But smiles elicit smiles
And we each won a friend.
For something free, I'd say*

That's quite a dividend.

Perry Tanksley

87. Festival of Lights

During December, people of the Jewish faith celebrate Hanukkah. It is a celebration that also has meaning in the Christian world. It relates to how a small group of faithful Jewish people resisted being forced to give up of their religion, the courageous acts of herosim during that time, and an event in the temple that is celebrated today as a miracle. These events occurred after the close of what we call the Old Testament, and before the birth of Christ. The king of Syria determined to rid Judea of any trace of their religion. He tortured and killed anyone who resisted. In a small town near Jerusalem, an old Jewish priest named Mattathias threw down the Greek idol that was placed there, and called out: Whoever is for the Lord, follow me! Thus began a rebellion that included some of the most dramatic episodes in military history. A relatively small band of determined fighters for the Lord stood off and defeated the many times larger forces of the Syrian king. In 165 B.C., they recaptured the city of Jerusalem from the Syrians. The Syrians had desecrated the temple, sacrificed pigs to Greek gods there, and destroyed much of it. The faithful Jews set about to clean, repair, and reconsecrate their beloved temple. They needed oil to light the temple's seven-branched candelabrum that always burned. They found only one jar of oil, which was enough to last just one day. Miraculously the oil burned for eight days, until more oil could be obtained. This miracle is celebrated today as Hanukkah, which is Hebrew for dedication. Candles are lit on each of the eight nights of Hanukka in remembrance of the mighty struggle that preserved their religious freedom, the liberation of the temple, and the miracle of the oil. Let your Jewish friends know how much you also appreciate what they are celebrating.

Dreidel. This is a traditional game that is often played after the lighting of the candles, and gifts are exchanged. A dreidel is a four-sided top with a Hebrew letter on each side. The letters are the first letters of Hebrew words meaning, "A great miracle happened there." Here is a modified version using a die. Each player starts with an equal number of candies, raisins, or nuts. At the start, players each put one candy in the center as the pot. Players then take turns rolling the die. Anytime a 5 or 6 comes up, player rolls again. If a 1 is rolled, player does nothing. If 2, player puts one candy in the pot If 3, player wins half the pot. If 4, player wins the whole pot. Play continues until one player has won all the candies, raisins, or nuts, or the end is reached of an agreed-upon time period.

88. Loved Ones From the Past

The Christmas season is a good time to appreciate loved ones who have died. Visit family or friend grave sites. Spend some time looking at photos or other memorabilia. Look forward to a time of joyous reunion as promised in the scriptures.

*For friendship holds a sacred cord,
That with the fibers of my heart
Entwines so deep, so close, 'tis hard
For death's dissecting hand to part.
I feel the low responses roll
Like far-off echoes of the night
And whisper softly through my soul,
I would not be forgotten quite.*

Eliza R. Snow (Pioneer poet)

John 11:25-26 ... *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die...*

89. Winter Solstice

In December, the days become ever shorter, and the nights longer. Then comes the winter solstice when the sun seems to have a rebirth and the days start to grow longer again. Connect it with Christmas as a rebirth.

Mosiah 5:7 And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

90. Candy Wreath

Make a candy wreath by tying individually wrapped candy to a wire coat hanger bent to a circle. You need very fine wire to tie each candy on to the hanger. Take the fine wire and wrap it against the hanger and also wrap it around the tail of the candy wrapper. Continue wrapping until the hanger is completely full. Tie a pair of scissors and hang them from the top of the hanger. Place a bow at the top, along with a sign saying Merry Christmas. Make it a tradition to hang the candy wreath on a wall, or your front door, during the twelve days before Christmas. Each evening, gather the family around and have everyone in the room, including any visitors, tell why they are thankful for Christmas, what Christmas means to them, or what about their family or friends makes them happy. The group then tells the person to have a happy holiday candy. He or she may then cut off and enjoy two candies. Write the comments in a book so it can be saved and treasured in coming years. The wreath can also be hung on the front door for visitors to cut a candy as best wishes are expressed.

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.

Helen Keller

91. Twelve Days of Christmas Stockings

Each family member hangs up a Christmas stocking twelve days before Christmas, and discovers some small treat or gift in it that can be enjoyed each morning. Dad or Mom assigns each person in the family to act as a Santa Claus to another member of the family with the responsibility of taking care of that person's stocking. The trick is to keep it a secret, and make each day a little extra special for everyone. A husband and wife without children at home could act as Santa to each other. A single person might send a package to a loved one containing twelve items to be opened each of the twelve days before Christmas.

John 14:35 *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Christmas is a beautiful dream you can experience best when wide awake.

M. E .

92. Baby's First Christmas

Appreciate and pay particular attention to the babies you see during the Christmas season.

Hang up the baby's stocking:

Be sure you don't forget --

The dear little dimpled darling!

She ne'er saw Christmas yet;

*But I've told her all about it,
And she opened her big blue eyes,
And I'm sure she understood it,
She looked so funny and wise.*

*Dear! what a tiny stocking!
It doesn't take much to hold
Such little pink toes as baby's
Away from the frost and cold.
But then, for the baby's Christmas
It will never do at all;
Why, Santa wouldn't be looking
For anything half so small.*

*I know what will do for the baby,
I've thought of the very best plan --
I'll borrow a stocking of grandma,
The longest that ever I can;
And you'll hang it by mine, dear mother,
Right here in the corner, so!
And write a letter to Santa,
And fasten it on to the toe.*

*Write, "This is the baby's stocking
That hangs in the corner here:
You never have seen her, Santa,
For she only came this year;
But she's just the blessedest baby --
And now, before you go,
Just cram her stockings with goodies,
From the top clean down to the toe."*

Anonymous

93. Collect and Memorize Christmas Songs

Select one new Christmas song each year to memorize, learn the parts, and discuss fully the meaning of the words and message. If possible, find out the story behind the song. For example, the words for Silent Night were written on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1818, by Joseph Mohr, an assistant priest in an obscure village in

Austria. The organ of the small church was broken, and so Father Mohr decided to write a new hymn as a substitute for the organ music. Franz Gruber, the organist, wrote the music so the song could be accompanied by guitar. It is now the most used of all Christmas carols.

Silent Night! holy night!
All is calm, all is bright;
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child,
Holy Infant so tender and mild:
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night! holy night!
Darkness flies, all is light;
Shepherds hear the angels sing:
Alleluia! hail the King!
Christ the Saviour is born.

Silent night! holy night!
Guiding Star, lend thy light!
See the Eastern Wise Men bring
Gifts and homage to our King!
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born.

Silent night! holy night!
Wondrous Star, lend thy light!
With the angels let us sing
Alleluia to our King!
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born.

94. A Christmas Toast

A toast is a call on another or others to drink to some person or thing. The name originated from the early custom of putting spiced toast into the drink to be used. At the end of Christmas Day, have special strips of toast and apple cider or some other special drink available. Each person offers a toast for the coming year, and a wish and commitment that the Christmas Spirit may continue.

May each Christmas, as it comes, find us more and more like Him who at this time became a little child, for our sake; more simple-minded, more humble, more affectionate, more resigned, more happy, more full of God.

John Henry Newman

95. Spirit of Christmas Past

If the Spirit of Christmas Past visited you, like he did Scrooge, what things would He show you? Reflect back on the old year and see if there are things you would like to change or correct during the coming year.

*Not in the clamor of the crowded street,
Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng,
But in ourselves, are triumph and defeat.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

96. Table Cloth Christmas Story<N>

Use a sheet to make a table cloth Christmas story. Use colored marking pens and paints. Start at one side of the sheet and going around it, draw pictures to tell the Christmas story.

Luke 2:8-10 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

97. Take Time to Build Fun Memories

The possibilities for traditions include almost anything that catches on and is either meaningful or fun. In our house, it was the challenge my children had of wresting me out of bed Christmas morning before anyone was allowed to go in where the Christmas tree and presents were. Year after year the struggle became more intense and creative. I had to resort to such tricks as:

- ☺ Locking the bedroom door.
- ☺ Using water guns to hold them off.
- ☺ Tying myself to the bed.
- ☺ Putting ice cubes down the backs of pajamas.
- ☺ Hiding, and leaving a series of notes from the Grinch, who supposedly kidnapped me, with clues where to look.
- ☺ Placing newspapers over the bedroom windows and turning the clocks back several hours so the children would think it wasn't morning yet.
- ☺ Hiding in one of the large, wrapped presents.
- ☺ When my children got too big, the grandchildren took over. Last year we had a car chase down the freeways before they were able to open their presents.

98. Gingerbread Houses

Making gingerbread houses is a really fun tradition. Here's an easy shortcut. Make the houses out of graham crackers. To cut the graham crackers easily, steam them just until they are soft, and then make your cuts. Most graham crackers have little indented dots on them that line up to make your cutting job easier. The front and

back sides are made by cutting the top square of each into a triangle half the size of the square. Cut out windows and the door. The roof and sides are easy, just use the crackers the way they come out of the box. Put pieces together with a glue gun. Cut other shapes out of steamed crackers: chimney, animals, trees, etc. Use different frostings and candies to add decorations.

John 14:2 *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

99. As Jesus Would See You

Consider what Christ sees and feels as He looks at your life. Contemplate the love He has for you. If you were the only person who ever lived on this earth, He would still have come. Imagine His pain and concern for some of your actions, but that He sees also what you can be if you follow His teachings. Realize He is your advocate always, and is totally committed to your success in reaching the kingdom. Feel His commitment each time you close your prayers in His name.

D&C 29:5 *Lift up your hearts and be glad, for I am in your midst, and am your advocate with the Father; and it is his good will to give you the kingdom.*

100. New Year's Mission, Goals, and Covenants

Have the Christmas season end on New Years by writing your mission statement, goals, and covenants for the new year.

Philippians 3:13 *Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

To every man there openeth

A way, and ways and a way.

And the high soul climbs the high way

And the low soul climbs the low,

And in between, on the misty flats,

The rest drift to and fro.

But to every man there openeth

A high way and a low:

And every man decideth

Which way his soul shall go.

John Oxenham