

Shepherd's Staff

December 2023

We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.

"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m.

The Light of the World

Tis the season that we see the decorations come out of storage for Christmas. The lights that transform our Christmas tree into a glowing work of art and the lights that outline homes is an enjoyable display of our handywork. Still the festive lights we see have changed over the years. From a pagan beginning we have the movement toward a more Christian theme. It seems that we Christians enjoy taking a pagan symbol and turning it into a symbol of faith.

The story behind the pagan light was to simply bring light into the darkness of winter and began with the lighting of candles to shorten the night. We even used candles on pine trees as a decoration with the candle lit for only a short time before the invention of electric lights. No wonder many trees would burn in the process. This is not something I would recommend today. I read that the Christmas tree lights first came into popularity when President Cleveland placed them on the White House family Christmas tree. The cost of the lights was out of reach for most families, but the trend was started to use strings of electric lights.

I chuckle with some of the folks in the neighborhood who are trying to put up lights on their houses as they work to untangle the cords. I laugh to myself and ask if they are working on their knot tying skills. It usually gets a chuckle in response. Some homeowners have even hired contractors to come in and decorate their home for them. The professional job looks great but for me the lights are not that elaborate, so I easily get by doing it myself. Still the beauty of the night is brought out with the lighted displays.

Still why do we work so hard to decorate our trees and homes? I like to think that we are marking the joyous season when we remember that Christ came into the darkness of the world as the light of the world. After all Jesus claimed to be the light of the world so why shouldn't we light up the darkness of the long winter nights with lights that can point us to remember Christ? The beauty of the lights against the dark night cheers us up as we drive around town to see what the community has done with the lights.

Having lights light up the night is an enjoyable way to remember Christ coming, we must also let our light shine as well. Christians are called to shine with the reflected light of the Savior in our lives every day. We should be able to brighten up a room when entering because of who we belong to. With Christ in us we can and should let our light shine in the smiles on our faces and the joy in which we enter act with our neighbors and those we meet on the streets. Perhaps the joy we gain from viewing the lights will light up our attitude so that we can present the joy of Christmas to the world as well.

Pastor Rus

Christmas Cookies

Yield: about 4 dozen 2-1/2-inch cookies

- 2/3 cup butter
- 2/3 cup shortening
- 1-1/2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 3-1/2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder

Cream the butter and shortening with the sugar, then beat in eggs and vanilla. Combine flour, salt, and baking powder, then stir them into the creamed mixture to make a soft dough. Chill *thoroughly*.

Work with only a small amount of the cold dough at a time. Use lots of flour to roll dough. (May use a combination of flour and confectioners' sugar instead of plain flour. This gives the cookies a sweeter taste, and they do not taste like flour.) Roll about 1/8 inch thick, cut out cookie shapes, and use a metal spatula to transfer them to a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake at 375 degrees F for 7 to 10 minutes, or until lightly browned.

These cookies can be decorated a variety of ways. Can frost them after they are cool. Or use colored sugar sprinkled on them before baking. Can use a mixture of egg yolks, a little water, and some food coloring and "paint" them before baking, too.

Recipe from The Old Farmer's Almanac



A Christmas Prayer

by Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father,

Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.



Close the door of hate
and open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing
which Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning
make us happy to be thy children,
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven,
for Jesus' sake.

Amen.



December Birthdays/Anniversaries



Happy Birthday

12/6	Darlene Bruns
12/7	Delbert Cordes
12/7	Joel Reints
12/12	Angie Meester
12/14	Clayton Groeneveld
12/17	Rylan Ascher
12/20	Duane Anderson
12/31	John Oltman

Happy Anniversary

12/10	John & Karen Oltman
12/17	Mark & Lanae Kramer
12/27	Irv & Amy Haan



Reminder: If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Armstrong by the 20th of the month.



Hidden Pictures®

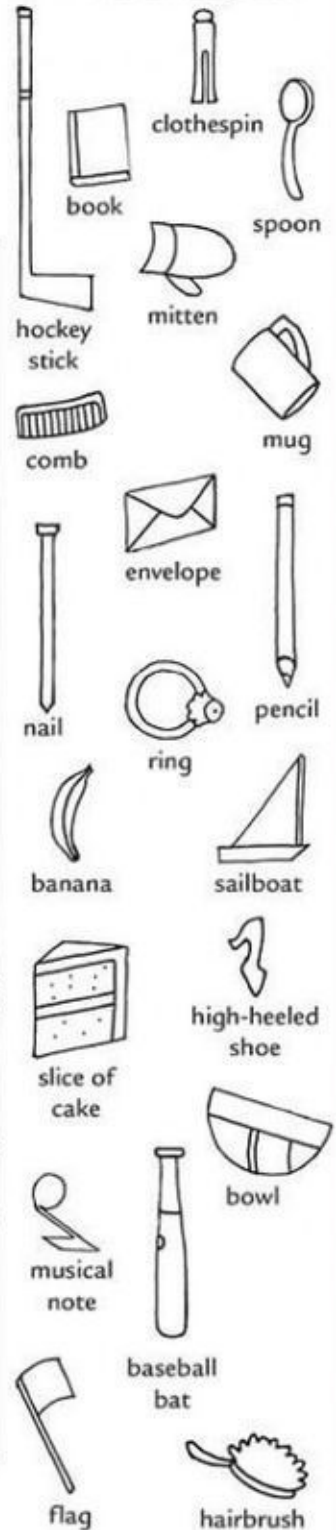
Decorating for the Holidays

By Sally Springer



In this big picture, find the baseball bat, bowl, mug, mitten, hockey stick, comb, slice of cake, high-heeled shoe, spoon, musical note, nail, clothespin, pencil, ring, book, banana, sailboat, flag, envelope, and hairbrush.

Can you find these hidden objects?



Highlights

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