



Pleasant News

Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church

IN THIS ISSUE-DECEMBER 2022

- Pg 1 Inspiration Point
- Pg 3 From the Pastor's Desk
- Pg 4 Memorials and Honorariums
- Pg 5 Recipe Box
- Pg 6 Recommended Reading
- Pg 7 United Women in Faith News
- Pg 7 JOY Group December Outing
- Pg 8 After School Care Post
- Pg 8 Men's Breakfast
- Pg 9 Helping Families for the Holidays
- Pg 9 Advent at The Grove
- Pg 10 Country Ham Sale
- Pg 10 Holiday Office Hours
- Pg 10 Lending Library
- Pg 11 Reverse Advent Calendar
- Pg 11 PG Prayer Lunch
- Pg 12 Christmas Eve and Day at The Grove
- Pg 13 Thanks and Sympathies
- Pg 14 Just For Giggles
- Pg 15 Puzzle

WORSHIP TIMES

- 8:45am Bible Study Groups
- 10:00am Worship in the Sanctuary

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Inspiration Point

I do not know for sure, but I think Mary was about 15 or 16 years old when she got pregnant with Jesus! I would think Joseph was about 25 or 26. Every woman in Israel knew the Messiah was coming and they hoped they would be the one chosen! But God chose Mary! What kind of woman was Mary that God would choose her to carry His only begotten Son? I expect that she was a strong person, well mannered, humble, loving and kind! I would think that her parents had raised her right from the start. I also believe that she had a heart for God! She was faithful in her worship and her prayers! God's heart had a soft spot in it for Mary!

Let us look at Joseph! What kind of person was he? God chose him to be the father figure in Jesus's life. He was a carpenter, worked with wood, and was obviously highly skilled at what he did. In his day there were several villages around the Sea of Galilee and some of them housed some very prosperous Roman officials. Joseph's work would have been steady. He would be very strong, and his hands would be rough and calloused. He had a heart for God as well! He was a good man and always did right by his fellow man. Their marriage would have been an arranged one, with Joseph providing a dowry for his wife. Once the marriage contract was signed, there was a waiting period and then the wedding! It would have been a marvelous celebration!

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Now, Mary and Joseph lived in the town of Nazareth. But there was a problem, you see. Prophecy said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem! Do you suppose that it was a coincidence that the Roman Emperor, August, called for a census at that time? I think not! It was 75 to 80 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem and they would travel on foot. Joseph did own a donkey, so their clothes, supplies, and Mary would ride on that! Can you imagine this very pregnant (9 months' worth) young girl riding 3 to 4 days on a donkey over rough terrain? It probably took closer to 5 days, and she would be very tired!

Bethlehem was not a large place, and there were just a few rooming houses. Because they had to travel so slowly, all the rooms were taken when they arrived. One innkeeper saw Mary's condition and allowed them to bed down in his stable. At least it was shelter and there was clean straw to bed down on. It would not have been too long before Mary would feel the birth pains. Jesus was born just like all the babies at that time. The Bible does not say it, but they had midwives to help with the birthing of babies then. If one were available, I am sure Joseph would have gotten her one! While Jesus's birth itself was not something spectacular, God had a plan! He was going to put on a show!

Now, many folks made a living owning sheep during that time, and they would gather at night, put the sheep in a pen and watch over them by the fires. The fires kept them warm and kept the wild animals away from the sheep. They probably had dinner and were sitting around telling stories or maybe doing some chores. That is when God chose to reveal His Beloved Son to the world! An Angel appeared in the sky, shining brilliantly like the sun! They shrunk back and were afraid! **The Angel spoke to them, "Do not be afraid!" he said, "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all the people. The Savior, yes, the Messiah, the Lord, has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly the Angel was joined by a whole host of others—the Armies of Heaven—praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those in whom God is pleased!"**

Then they went back to heaven as quickly as they had come! Would you say this was a big deal? This baby has changed the whole world! Even today we celebrate His birthday, and it is celebrated all around the world! He has paid for our salvation by dying and shedding his own blood for the forgiveness of our sins on the cross! Many of our loved ones are now in heaven, living lives of peace and joy forever! One day you and I will join them there and won't that be a time of rejoicing!

This Christmas, as we gather around the table with our families, let's remember it is not about the material things, but about our Savior who loves us so deeply! Let His love shine through you to those around you! Take the time to tell them how much you love them!

Merry Christmas from Brother Phil and the Newsletter staff!

From the Pastor's Desk

TREASURING CHRISTMAS

LUKE 2:19

In the Christmas story, I like how Luke used the phrase, *"All who heard the shepherd's story were astonished, but Mary quietly treasured those things in her heart and thought about them often."* (Luke 2:19)

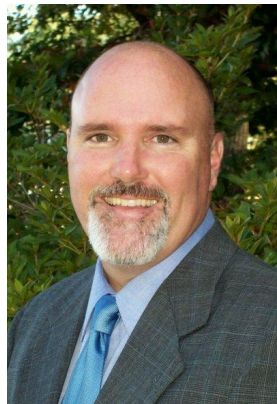
The King James says, *"Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."*

It means that year after year she thought about the events leading to the first Christmas -- how she was chosen to participate in God's story of salvation, how God brought everything together, how she witnessed firsthand that, like the angel had said to her many months before, *"Nothing is impossible for God."* (Luke 1:37)

Mary's example is a good one to follow. We should remember to treasure these things and think about them often. There are so many lessons to be learned from the nativity story.

- From the wisemen we learn that God speaks to anyone who will listen, and he leads anyone who is willing to follow.
- From Mary and Joseph, we learn what it means to fully submit to the will of God. We learn that obedience takes courage, and that it's better to obey God than worry about what others think or say.
- From the shepherds -- those minimum wage workers who were watching sheep late in the night -- we learn that no one is too poor or too insignificant to have a personal experience with God.
- Even from cruel Herod, we are reminded of how foolish it is to try to hinder the purpose of God.
- Most of all, from Jesus, we learn that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

We're beginning a busy season of the year -- stressful sometimes, hectic, and financially challenging. Follow Mary's example: Remember to remember the first Christmas. Treasure the story, think about it often, and ponder its meaning in your heart.



Merry Christmas,
Pastor Byron

THE FOLLOWING GIFTS WERE MADE TO THE CHURCH IN MEMORY OR IN HONOR OF:

IN MEMORY

Bobby Puckett

Steve and Karen Dellinger – Cemetery Fund

Rickey and Lynda Elliott – Cemetery Fund

Brenda Watkins – Cemetery Fund

Anonymous – Cemetery Fund

Edwin Barnes

Nadine Williams – Family Life Center

Anonymous – Cemetery Fund

Penny Quick

Steve and Karen Dellinger – Cemetery Fund

Wanda Baucom

Anonymous – Cemetery Fund

Herby Vanhoy

Phyllis Vanhoy

Mikeal Mitchell

Nadine Williams

Susan Pringle

Steve and Karen Dellinger

Hazel Sanders

Ron and Anna Robinson

Rickey and Lynda Elliott – Cemetery Fund

Brenda Watkins – Cemetery Fund

Anonymous – Cemetery Fund



The Recipe Box

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year!!!” And it is during the Christmas season that we enjoy some of the most wonderful kitchen creations of the entire year! We allow those little indulgences, those special sweet treats, those dishes that take just a little extra time and effort, to take front and center of the holiday table. It is also when we tend to share with friends and neighbors in a more intentional way. But a special Christmas treat doesn’t have to be complicated and involved. It doesn’t have to have an ingredient list as long as your arm. A special sweet treat for your table, or a little goodie bag to send home with your loved ones can have a few simple ingredients, can be quick to put together, and can still be beautiful to look at and deeply appreciated.

This month’s recipe fits the bill! **White Christmas Peppermint Oreo Bark** has three easy ingredients, takes about 30 minutes to put together, and will be the talk of your guests at Christmastime. Put some of this sweetness on a Christmas platter for grazing. Pass it around after your main course as just that little something sweet we all enjoy after a good meal. Or tie a few pieces up together in a cellophane bag and send it home with your guests. Either way, this versatile little goodie is sure to delight one and all...it’s so good you just might need to make more than one batch!!!



White Christmas Peppermint Oreo Bark

20 ounces white chocolate Candiquik, or white chocolate morsels

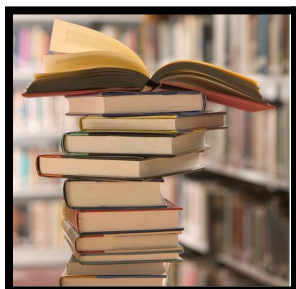
16 Oreos, roughly chopped

1/3 cup crushed peppermint candy canes

For both the Oreos and the candy canes, you can put them in separate resealable bags and then crush them with your rolling pin. Just have fun with it!

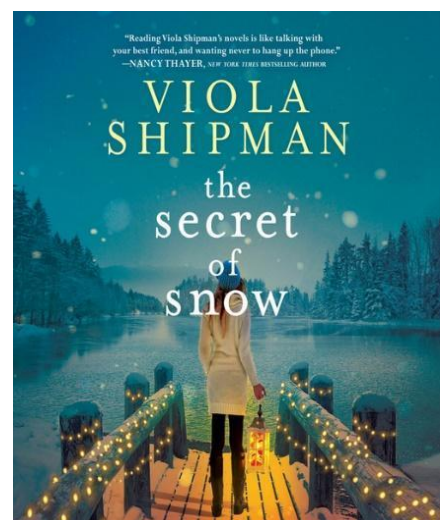
Line a 9x13 rimmed baking pan with parchment paper, making sure that extra paper hangs over the sides for easy lifting once the chocolate is hardened. Set the pan aside. In a medium bowl, break 8 ounces of white chocolate into pieces, or pour 8 ounces of chocolate morsels. Microwave until fully melted and smooth. Be sure to stop and stir every 30 seconds so that the chocolate doesn’t burn. Once chocolate is melted, spread onto prepared pan using a spatula or knife. White chocolate should cover the entire pan in a thin layer. Top with crushed Oreo cookies. Place the pan in the refrigerator for about ten minutes to allow it to harden. As the Oreo layer is hardening, melt the remaining 12 ounces of white chocolate in the microwave until smooth, taking care not to burn the chocolate. Remove pan from refrigerator and spread the second batch of chocolate over the top of the Oreo layer in another even layer, covering the entire first layer. Sprinkle crushed candy canes over the top. Place in the refrigerator for 15 minutes to harden completely. Once ready, remove from the refrigerator and lift parchment paper by overhanging edge and set on counter. Chocolate will lift right out of the paper. Break into pieces by hand or using a knife. Bark will keep in an airtight container for up to one month if left on the counter or will keep in the refrigerator for several months...if it stays around that long!!!

Recommended Reading



So many times, when we think of the cold, wintry evenings that approach, we also think of snuggling in with a mug of hot cocoa, a comforting warm blanket, and a good book. If this is how you wish to spend at least a few of your winter nights, then we have just the book for you! The Secret of Snow, by Viola Shipman, is a beautifully written story about second chances, realizing that you usually can't escape your past, and the beauty of a small town at Christmastime.

When Sonny Dunes, a Southern California meteorologist who is all about sunshine and seventy-two-degree days, suddenly loses her job, she finds herself in quite the predicament. She is being replaced by a virtual meteorologist that will never age, gain weight, or renegotiate its contract! And she finds that the only television station willing to give the fifty-year-old meteorologist another shot is the very place Sonny's been avoiding since the day she left for college...her Northern Michigan hometown; a place where winters can be painfully long and dark, dominated by a phenomenon known as lake-effect snow. So, she grudgingly returns to the long, snowy winter of her childhood with the added humiliation of moving back in with her mother. Sonny quickly discovers that she is not quite an outsider but no longer a local. She also finds that her past is blindsiding her from every direction: from the high school friends she ghosted, to the former journalism classmate and mortal frenemy who is now her boss, to, most impactfully, the long-ago death of her younger sister who dearly loved the snow, as well as the mother who caused Sonny to leave her hometown in the first place.



To distract herself from the unwelcome memories and the obstacles before her, Sonny decides to throw herself headfirst into covering every small-town winter event. From sledding and ice fishing, to skiing and winter festivals, the merrymaking culminates with the town's famed Winter Ice Sculpture Contest. All of this serves as a distraction, yes. But it also is her effort to woo a new audience and cement her second chance at success in her hometown. The town's winter events are run by the director of the chamber of commerce, whose genuine love of Michigan, all things winter, and Sonny, draw the two of them together time after time. He has optimism to spare and makes Sonny's forays into winning over the town all-the-more bearable. However, with someone trying to undermine her efforts to rebuild her career, she must make peace with who she used to be and allow her heart to thaw if she's ever going to find a place she can truly call home.

With the forecast calling for a reluctant homecoming and some regrettable decisions with a strong chance for romance, Sonny might just be able to thaw her heart and restart her life in a way she never could have predicted! The Secret of Snow is an enjoyable read with believable characters and backstories. It is also a story with humor and hope! We genuinely believe that you will enjoy this book and encourage you to borrow it from our very own Lending Library at Pleasant Grove! It is also available from online and brick-and-mortar booksellers. Happy Reading!!!

News from United Women in Faith



Thanks to all members of the United Women in Faith for their participation in the worship service on Sunday, November 20th. A big “thank you,” too, for all the delicious baked goods made available for sale that day. Funds from the bake sale and the “missions walk” in September will be combined and donations will be made to as many as eight organizations involved with outreach on the district and local level (our own church included).

Our unit of United Women in Faith has committed to host the Metro District Mission Study in the Spring of 2023. This event will be on Saturday, March 4th, from 8:30 AM - 2:00 PM in our Family Life Center. All Circle members are needed to help with the hosting duties for this meeting. So, please mark your calendars now and plan to be available for this event. As the new year begins you will learn more about our responsibilities for this day. This will be a great opportunity to serve in missions and will be a great learning opportunity for us all.

Attention all Mission Pin recipients from 2014-2021. If you received a Mission Pin during this time frame, please let Jeannie Upton or Lynda Elliott know. We need to update our records and check for accuracy. Thanks!

With Christmas gift giving season upon us, be sure to remember that we still have Pleasant Grove cookbooks available for purchase. They are on sale for \$5.00. You can pick up one, or two, or more from the church office, or see any member of the United Women in Faith. And just like that...You will cross off some names from your gift list!!! Maybe you can also help us out by letting your friends know that we have this great giftable cookbook available.

From the United Women in Faith to You...Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!!



The JOY Group Hits the Road to Celebrate Christmas!



Our JOY Group (Joyous Older Youth) have a great trip planned for Friday, December 16!!! We are going to the Wohlfahrt Haus Dinner Theatre in Wytheville, Virginia. We will travel by charter bus, leaving the church parking lot at 8:30 AM. The day will consist of great fellowship together, a scrumptious meal, and a beautiful Christmas play entitled, “I’ll Be Home For Christmas.” We hear that this play is chock full of all of our favorite Christmas music! **At this time, we are sold out for this adventure!!!** However, if you would like to be placed on a waiting list, in case of a cancellation, call Dawn in the church office. We look forward to this trip, which certainly promises to lift the Christmas spirit in us all!!!

After School Care Post



Thanksgiving is almost here, and we have so many things to be thankful for! The kids have been working on turkeys and cornucopias and they did an awesome job with these!! We are now looking forward to celebrating the most wonderful time of the year! We always work on so many different crafts and creations during the Christmas season.

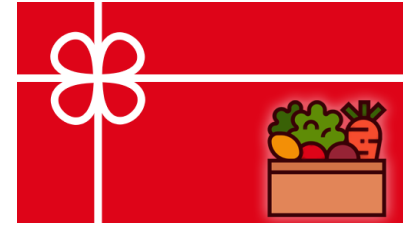


Our group is growing a bit. We did have a few students withdraw from our program, but then we gained a few more awesome kids. We are now hoping that our group will continue to grow. From our students to your homes...We wish everyone a happy and blessed Thanksgiving!!!



Spreading Christmas Cheer

...and helping families in need at the same time!!! Here we go again, Pleasant Grove, doing one of the things that we do so well! Loving on God's children with the love he has lavished on us!!! In November, we were able to help twelve families with their Thanksgiving Feast by providing them with a grocery store gift card. Now, with Christmas right around the corner, we have the opportunity to do the same. If you missed out on the chance to be a part of the Thanksgiving gift cards, or you are just feeling extra generous and want to help with both, we welcome your donation. The two-week Christmas break is especially hard for families that find themselves in a food



insecure situation. Because of this, we would like to provide as much help as we can to these families. Whether they use the help to put together a bountiful Christmas dinner, or just decide to stock up on the basics, we know that this assistance will be greatly appreciated. If you wish to participate in this outreach, you can simply place your donation, in any amount, into the offering on Sunday morning. You can also stop by the church office with your donation. Just be sure to mark your check, or an envelope, with "Oakdale School." Thanks to all who make this happen. It is such a privilege to be the hands and feet of Jesus right here in our own community!!!



Advent at The Grove

The Advent season has always been a special time around Pleasant Grove. It is that time of the Christian year when we prepare our hearts for the arrival of the Christ Child and ponder the meaning of His coming and the promise of our salvation through Him. And while there are so many opportunities to get together, to make merry, to exchange gifts, and share meals during this time, we want to remind you of some very special times of meditation, reflection, praise, and worship that will be offered throughout Advent. All the other stuff is fun but it's these times of being together with the church family that will really impact your Christmas season with true meaning...a richness...a freshness of faith...a closer walk with Jesus. Please plan to gather with us as we anticipate the birth of our Savior!!!



Each Sunday...November 27th, December 4th, December 11th, and December 18th
Matin Services, 8:30 – 8:55 AM, in the Chapel
Sunday School, 9:00 – 9:45 AM
Morning Worship, 10:00 – 11:00, in the Sanctuary

Sunday, December 18th, during Morning Worship, our Chancel Choir will offer a choral Advent Presentation.

It's Country Ham Time Again!!!



Circle #6 of our United Women in Faith organization is once again offering that delicious Alexander's Country Ham!!! The ham comes in one pound vacuum-sealed packages, ready to use or ready to freeze for a later use. But really, what could be better than waking up on Christmas morning, frying up some good ole' country ham, baking up some fluffy biscuits, and maybe even stirring up some Red Eye Gravy?? (Well, having someone do all of that for you might be better, but that's something you will have to take up with your family!!!)

This year's ham is selling for \$8 per pack and the last day to order is December 9th. It will be available for pick up at the church on Sunday, December 11th, before and after worship. If you can't pick it up on that day, we will also have it for you on Tuesday, December 13th, from 5-6 PM. All pickups will be in the fellowship hall. To place your order, you can use the sign-up sheets in the Sunday school classes and church office or see any member of Circle #6. Funds raised from this effort will go to support missions around the world, in our community, and within our own church family. Thanks for helping this group of Sister-in-Christ reach beyond our church campus with the love of Jesus!



Holiday Office Hours

Please note that the church office will be closed beginning Friday, December 23rd and continuing through Sunday, January 1st. If you wish to make a contribution to the church, and have it credited to your 2022 giving statement, please be sure to have it in to the church office no later than Thursday, December 22nd, at 12:00 noon. If you

are mailing your contribution, make sure that it will arrive no later than Thursday, December 22nd. Beyond that date, there are no guarantees that your contribution will be posted before the close of the year.



Our Lending Library is Here for You!!!



Don't forget that Pleasant Grove has its own lending library! If you are looking for a good read...something that will inspire, inform, entertain, or help you along on your walk with the Lord...then we just may have what you need. We are located in the Gathering Room of the Family Life Center. Simply choose your title, take it home, enjoy it, and return it for others. Simple, isn't it? The books await. Let's get reading!!!

Reverse Advent Calendar

Place these items in a box in your home, December 1 – December 24. On Christmas Eve, bring that box with you to worship at 4:00pm. Place your box in the Lobby area of the Family Life Center.



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- December 1 - Box of cereal
- December 2 - Peanut butter
- December 3 - Stuffing mix
- December 4 - Boxed potatoes
- December 5 - Macaroni & cheese
- December 6 - Canned fruit
- December 7 - Canned tomatoes
- December 8 - Canned tuna
- December 9 - Dessert mix
- December 10 - Apple sauce cups
- December 11 - Canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - Cranberry sauce
- December 13 - Canned beans
- December 14 - Box of crackers
- December 15 - Package of rice
- December 16 - Package of oatmeal
- December 17 - Package of pasta
- December 18 - Spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - Chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - Tomato soup
- December 21 - Canned corn
- December 22 - Canned mixed vegetables
- December 23 - Canned carrots
- December 24 - Canned green beans

Pleasant Grove UMC
1915 Oakdale Road
Charlotte, North Carolina



LUNCH TIME

PG Prayer Lunch

The PG Prayer Lunch meets every Thursday at 11:30 a.m. at The Stockyard Restaurant. Everyone...men and women, church members and friends, are welcome to join us. We would love to have you with us for this time of food, fellowship, and prayer as we come together seeking God's power and presence in our lives and in the world around us.

Thursdays - 11:30 AM - The Stockyard

Christmas Eve at The Grove



We have had lots of incredibly beautiful moments at Pleasant Grove but some of the most remembered beautiful times would probably be our Christmas Eve Services. Once again, on this precious, holy day, we will gather as a church family to treasure the mysterious and wonderful way that God chose to enter our world. Our service, at 4:00 PM in the sanctuary, will include carols, communion, and candlelight, and a very special Christmas Eve message from our own Colin Winslette. Please plan to be with us for this sweet time in the life of our church family.

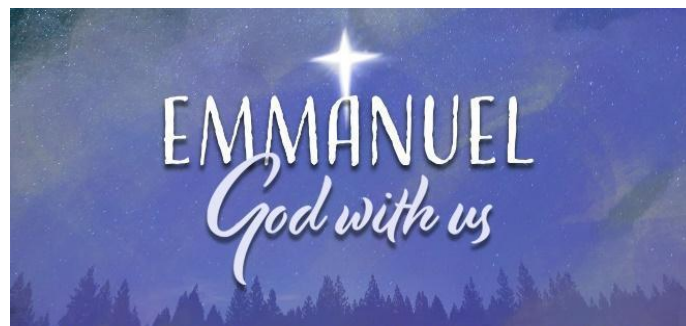


Christmas Day at The Grove

How exciting it is when Christmas Day falls on a Sunday and we get to gather with our Church family on this singularly joyous day!!! Please plan to join us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the marvelous gifts He has given us! On Sunday, December 25th, we will not have Sunday school. Instead, we will gather in the fellowship hall beneath the sanctuary at 9:15 for coffee, juice, and pastries. During this time, we will be



able to exchange Christmas greetings with one another and enjoy the sweet fellowship that is one of our trademarks. We will then move into the sanctuary for an abbreviated worship service beginning at 10:00. There will be no nursery for this service as we look forward to worshipping together, young and old, no matter our age. Pastor Byron will be bringing us an inspiring message for Christmas Day...one that we will carry with us into the New Year! We look forward to seeing you on Christmas Day!





The church office recently received these notes of thanks:

Dear Church Family,

Thank you so much for your notes of encouragement and blessings this past month. I know that the month of October was designated Clergy Appreciation Month, and while I don't expect any extra "thank yous," I really do appreciate your kind words of support. I am blessed to be your Pastor, and you are a great church family! Let's keep our eyes on Jesus and continue to push forward for the Kingdom of God. Again, thank you for your support and prayers!

---Pastor Byron

Dear Church Family,

We are so very grateful for all your prayers, well wishes, calls, and cards during the death of my daughter and the disappearance of my son! My son has returned home and is undergoing treatment for his confusion and mental problems. You have poured out your love and prayer support, and we could not have gotten through it all without you! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

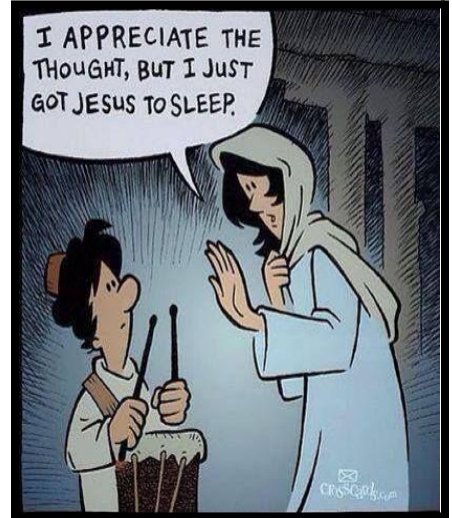
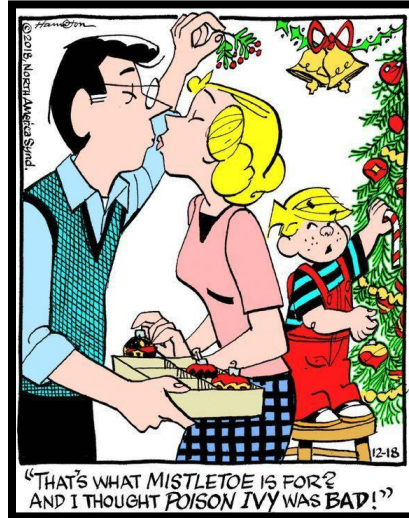
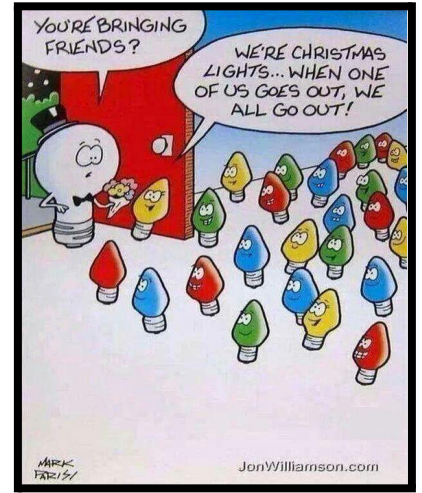
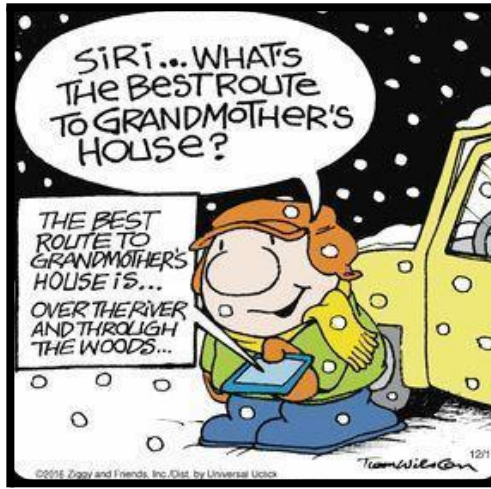
---Phil & Janie Turner



The church family extends our deepest sympathies to:

Phil and Janie Turner on the recent passing of Phil's daughter, Susan Pringle.

Just For Giggles!!!





O HOLY NIGHT

A D N H P W P J Q B T G F F S Q V
Y D M Q M I A A S T A R R L G F R
F X F A G R D O N K E Y A S Q L J
F S B U G S A V I O R M N F W U W
H H E A X W I X H Z I E K J A C B
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N J C U R Z Z X E U N O M N G L Z
B K Y M W I H F R A P E A C E G W

ANGEL
ANIMALS
BABY
BETHLEHEM
DONKEY
FRANKINCENSE

GIFTS
GOLD
JESUS
JOSEPH
MANGER
MARY

MYRRH
PEACE
SAVIOR
SHEPHERD
STAR
WISE MEN

