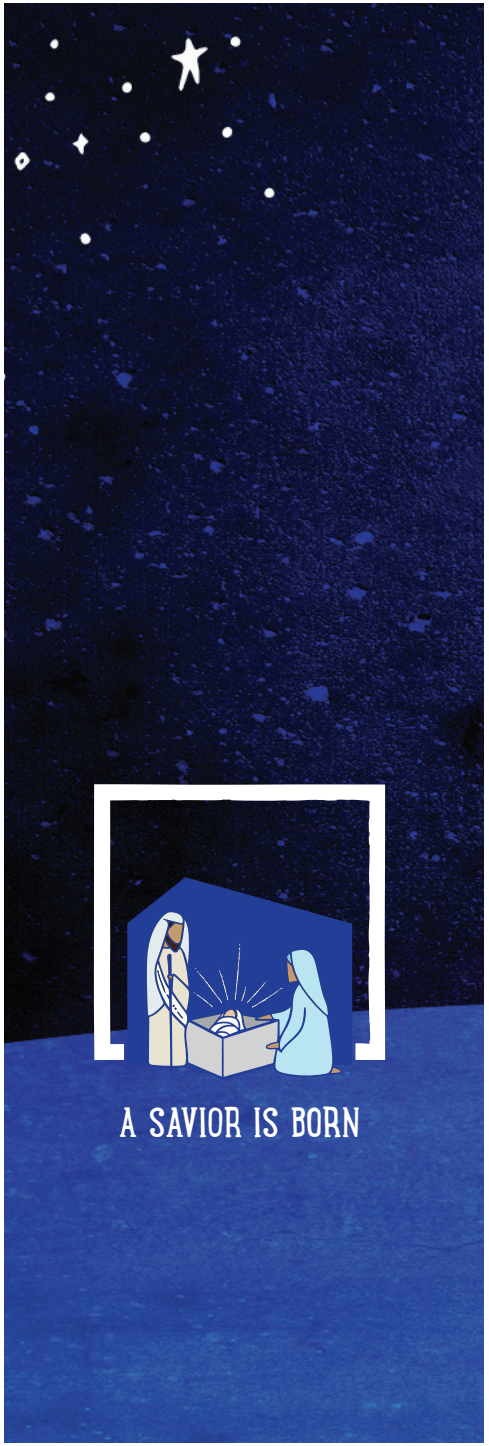
COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS



15 WAYS TO KEEP CHRISTMAS REAL



ARE YOU READY FOR SOMETHING TO FEEL HOPEFUL ABOUT THIS CHRISTMAS?

Christmas is supposed to be a celebration.

It's disheartening when this season leaves us feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and empty. It doesn't have to be that way. Instead, be intentional this season. It's time to have a Christmas that is memorable and meaningful.

Consider these 15 ways to help you do that.

BUT REMEMBER!

A meaningful Christmas isn't about checking all the boxes. These are 15 *ideas* to help you cultivate intentionality and meaning this Christmas. Embrace what works for you; let go of the rest.

Ascension Lutheran Church

4768 Union Deposit Road • Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Connect with us online at ascensionharrisburg.com

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Saturday, December 24, 2022

7 PM



A SAVIOR IS BORN

IDEA #1

BUY FEWER GIFTS.

Be intentional this season in how you spend your time and money.

Buying gifts is an opportunity to let people know that you care. But if it feels like an obligation or you have limited funds, it's time to say enough is enough.

Explore other ways to communicate your care to the important people in your life. Consider writing a thoughtful card, dropping off a batch of Christmas treats, or making time to connect over coffee.

IDEA #2

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS.

When life is a whirlwind of activity, it's hard to get to know your neighbors. We struggle to even know their names. Break the ice this season and go introduce yourself with a plate of Christmas cookies. Your initiative ***will*** be appreciated.

IDEA #3

BE A DECORATIONS MINIMALIST.

Putting up decorations both inside and outside your home can help create a festive feeling. But if it's causing unneeded stress, consider putting up fewer decorations.

A meaningful Christmas isn't about looking good or impressing others, but to be intentional in time well-spent.

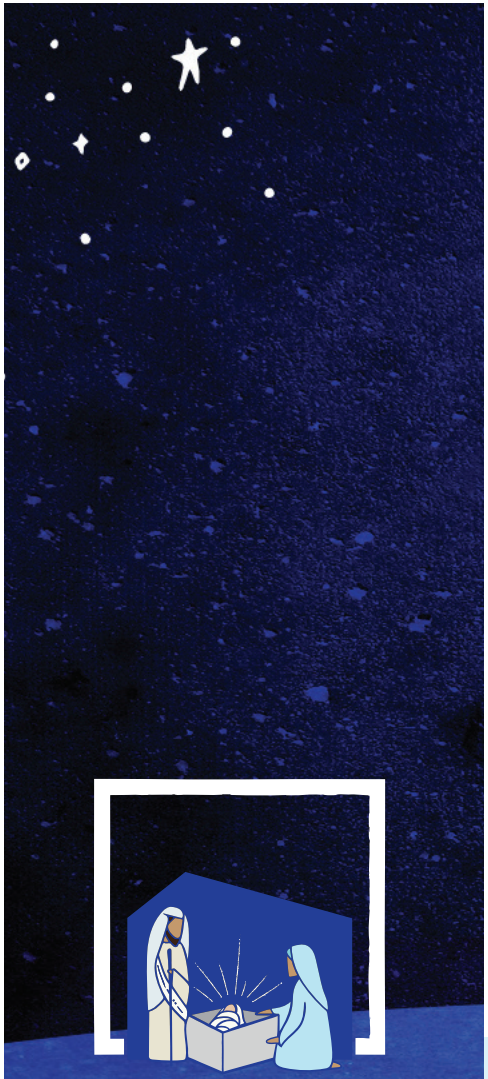
PAUSE & REFLECT

CANDLELIGHT

A flickering candle brings warmth and light to a dark room.

Jesus said, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5)

Light a candle and bask in the warmth of this message. God delivered peace amidst darkness so that you can have life. His light illumines a sense of purpose that the world cannot define or deliver.



A SAVIOR IS BORN

IDEA #4

WATCH A CHRISTMAS MOVIE.

A great way to get into the Christmas spirit is to watch a classic Christmas movie. Watch A Christmas Carol, It's a Wonderful Life, or A Charlie Brown Christmas. Snuggle on the couch with your favorite blanket and binge watch Hallmark Christmas movies.

Give yourself permission to break away from your to-do list and not feel guilty about it!

IDEA #5

TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

Do something off the wall that you have never done before. Ask people for ideas or scroll through Pinterest. Who knows? You may establish a new family tradition or laugh for years over an epic failure.

It's worth the attempt to break out of the ordinary and have a more meaningful Christmas.

IDEA #6

NO ELECTRONICS DAY.

Spend the day with your phone off and your television silent. Work on a puzzle, go on a long walk, window shop, or have an eggnog latte. Take the kids to a fun park or have a babysitter exchange with another family for some alone time.

Slow down. It's Christmas. It's time to let go of expectations and have a meaningful season.

PAUSE & REFLECT

A LITTLE BABY

The baby you see in the manger scene is a promise kept. God is faithful. He never gives up on you even when you feel like giving up on yourself. If you feel unworthy of his love, God is perfectly trustworthy of his promises and unconditional love. Like open arms that welcome a newborn baby, God opens his arms for you. Christmas reminds us that God has done everything for you through Christ so that you can receive everything meaningful from him.



A SAVIOR IS BORN

IDEA #7

CHRISTMAS TREE DAY.

Whether your tree is real or comes from a box, putting up the Christmas tree can be a special time. With Christmas music in the background, decorate the tree with people you care about.

This year, start a new tradition and put up a new tree ornament that represents a meaningful event from the past year that will spark your memory for years to come.

IDEA #8

DUST OFF THE BOARD GAMES.

Let's avoid gathering in the living room with everybody looking at their smart phones. Playing a board game is a gift because it helps you to stay in the present. From Catan to Candyland, whether strategic or funny, board games bring people together to interact, enjoy, and be engaged.

IDEA #9

DO NOTHING DAY.

And it will be okay. Like a reset button, it's possible to start over, be renewed, and be refreshed from all the burdens that separate you from having a meaningful Christmas. Set aside the overwhelming feelings of pressure, guilt, or sorrow and take time to define your Christmas and its central message.

PAUSE & REFLECT

A MANGER

The manger scene can resemble an off-the-grid lifestyle that separates itself from the world. Perhaps it is an appropriate scene. Holiday feelings can warm your heart but quickly dissipate. Pausing to separate yourself from the noise can allow you to redefine comfort and joy.

Jesus entered the world in a most humble way so that we can have life that matters. Lasting joy can only come from a source outside of ourselves. Faith in God's promises brings true and lasting peace, hope, and comfort that the world is unable to provide.



A SAVIOR IS BORN

IDEA #10

MAKE A CHRISTMAS DESSERT.

Baking can be a special part of Christmas. This season, do something different. Create a Christmas dessert. Find a recipe online or in a book, then go for it. Whether it's amazing or a complete disaster, absorb yourself in the process. It's something out of the ordinary that helps you be intentional this season.

IDEA #11

CHRISTMAS CRAFT DAY.

Find a fun craft that fits your ability level, then choose to give them away. Grandparents love anything from their grandchildren, and neighbors will appreciate the gesture. This year, call a senior care facility and ask if you can stop by to deliver crafts. You will see eyes light up with appreciation that somebody is thinking about them.

IDEA #12

PRACTICE GRATITUDE.

Send a hand-written thank you note to somebody that you care about or a person that did something for you.

Create a "jar of awesomeness" and fill it with notes of achievement, words of affirmation from others, and special memories with family and friends. End a day with each member of the family telling what they like the best about another member of the family. Record their thoughts and place it in the jar.

PAUSE & REFLECT

A STAR

The stunning images from the James Webb telescope are mysterious and vast. We cannot grasp something that is far bigger than ourselves.

Perhaps it was appropriate to have a star in Bethlehem where Jesus was born. It was a signal that a promise from the heavens had been kept. It was a sign that you matter to God. In something so mysterious as Christmas, its message can be lost in busyness and stress. Christmas receives meaning when we reflect upon the Light that came into our world.



A SAVIOR IS BORN

IDEA #13

CHANGE THE MAIN COURSE.

Consider having a nontraditional holiday meal this season. Consider setting up a gourmet burger or grilled cheese sandwich bar with a variety of different options. Spice things up with a taco bar. Or, maybe a pasta bar with an array of noodles, sauces, and toppings. Experiment and have fun.

IDEA #14

HIDE THE LAST PRESENT.

Make the last Christmas present to be opened both exciting and fun. Give an envelope that contains clues and send them on a scavenger hunt to help them find the hidden gift. Be prepared for laughs, giggles, and plenty of anticipation.

IDEA #15

GO & WORSHIP.

Sing familiar Christmas hymns, bask in the glow of candles, and soak in the decorations in the sanctuary. Coming to Christmas Eve worship is like putting the star on top of a Christmas tree. It's a time to pause and reflect upon the message behind Christmas.

Absorb the words, set aside cares, and ponder with your heart all that God has done for you.

PAUSE & REFLECT

A SAVIOR IS BORN

Jesus didn't arrive in a manger to bring peace in this world. Instead, he came to deliver us from the consequences of our sins. That's what being a Savior is all about.

Christmas is not meant to be a feel-good story. Rather, it's a message outside of ourself that brings hope when life seems hopeless. Christmas marks the beginning of a life that will end in death – a necessary act carried out on our behalf. His perfect life took our guilt – his death in our place set us free. His light becomes our life that absorbs stress and worry by focusing on his promises for the present and his assurances for eternity.

Come and see your Savior with a fresh perspective on what God has done for us in Christ. It's a message worth hearing. It's a message worth living. It's what makes Christmas meaningful.


CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH US!
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