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FROM THE  
PASTOR'S DESK  
Rev. Dr. Doug Rehberg

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## The Cost of Christmas

Joseph Scriven was born in Ireland. He graduated from college and was engaged to a beautiful girl whom he adored. On the eve of their wedding his fiancé drowned. Within weeks of the tragedy, his mother grew gravely ill and died. His response to the dual tragedies? He authored a hymn that goes like this, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear..." But I ask you, what kind of friend is it who takes your fiancé and mother in the span of a week? A loving one?

Years ago, when Bishop Madras was visiting an obscure, out of the way South American village, he walked into a mission the church had established there and was introduced to a young slave girl who had the title, "The Child Apostle."

The bishop had never laid eyes on this young woman before, but he had heard of her from numerous sources. He had heard about her fervor for Christ and her intense zeal for sharing Jesus with others. When he finally saw her, his countenance fell. Just looking at her he knew what had happened. Her little smile did nothing to mask the horror of her appearance. Her face, neck, and arms were completely disfigured. Her legs were a mass of welts and scars. As he stared at her, his eyes began to well up with tears. "My child," he said, "how could you bear this?" She looked at him with surprise and said, "Don't you too like to suffer for Christ?"

Let me ask you, what kind of Christ would allow a little girl to suffer incessant abuse from those who hated the message she'd deliver about Him? A loving One?

We talk of a loving God, what He will do and what He won't do. And nearly every time, we use our own standard of what we think love is. For most of us, we believe love to be something soft, gentle, human; something consistent with what we believe is right. Yet, while we may hold a variety of definitions of love, God only holds one. It's perhaps, most succinctly stated in I John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the necessary sacrifice for our sins." Where's the softness and gentleness in that? Where's the correctness in that? It's replaced by a different standard of love. Softness is replaced by sacrifice.

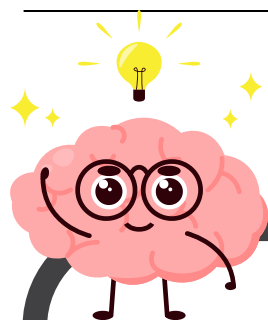
In all the hustle and bustle of this year's Christmas preparation and execution, there's a tendency to miss the essence of God's love to us at Christmas. While many seek to make the manger a soft and gentle place, it's but Jesus' first stop on His journey to the cross. Out of God's incomparable love, He came to suffer and die for us. Think of it. He was born so that we could be born again. He was obedient so that all of it would rebound to us. Everything He did in 33 years was to satisfy the righteous requirements His Father had placed on us.

The Child Apostle was right. There's no love without cost. Every attempt to follow a suffering Christ without suffering, a stigmatized Christ without stigma, puts a lie to the self disclosure of God in Jesus Christ.

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Paul puts it this way, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword? No! In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." These words speak not about immunity from suffering, but our inseparability from Him in the midst of it. Indeed, that's what Christmas is all about.



## TRIVIA

From 3,285 Bible Questions & Answers  
by Emily Filipi

### CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

Some of the most thrilling reading for the Christian is the story of the spread of the early church. Fill in each blank with the person or persons responsible for the mission effort.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ prayed with John that the Samaritans would receive the Holy Spirit, Acts 8:14-15.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ was sent by God to restore Saul's eye sight, Acts 9:10-12.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ witnessed to a eunuch in a chariot, Acts 8:26-27.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ sent Peter to Samaria to check on Philip's work, Acts 8:14.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ was stoned to death for his faith in Jesus, Acts 7:59.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ was the prophet the Ethiopian eunuch was reading, Acts 8:30.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ interceded in behalf of Saul after his conversion, Acts 9:27.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ caught Philip up, and the eunuch saw him no more, Acts 8:39.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ was blinded by a light on his way to persecute the Christians, Acts 9:1-3
10. \_\_\_\_\_ wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit, Acts 8:18-19.

Answers: 1. Peter; 2. Ananias; 3. Philip; 4. The Apostles; 5. Stephen; 6. Isaiah;  
7. Barnabas; 8. The Spirit of the Lord; 9. Saul; 10. Simon

### THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Fill in each blank with the correct answer about the Christmas story

1. \_\_\_\_\_ was the home of Mary and Joseph, Luke 2:4.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ announced Jesus' birth to Mary, Luke 1:26-27.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ was the town where Jesus was born, Luke 2:4-7.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ was where Jesus was laid, Luke 2:7.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ in a manger was the sign the shepherds were to look for to find Jesus, Luke 2:12.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ kept the sayings of the shepherds in her heart, Luke 2:19
7. \_\_\_\_\_ guided the Wise Men to Jesus, Matthew 2:2.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ was where the Wise Men found Jesus, Mathhew2:11.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ warned the Wise Men of Herod's trick, Matthew 2:12.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ told Joseph to flee with Jesus to Egypt, Matthew 2:13.

Answers: 1. Nazareth; 2. Gabriel; 3. Bethlehem; 4. Manger; 5. The babe; 6. Mary;  
7. A star; 8. A house; 9. God; 10. An angel







## Welcome Katie and Karen to the First Presby Staff!

Karen Crissman is joining the staff here at First Presby Irwin on December 1st as an Administrative Assistant with special duties as bookkeeper and treasurer. She also brings extensive knowledge and expertise in marketing and graphic design. She is already very involved with Christian Ed and the Children's Ministry Program. We are so happy to have her here!



Katie Redmond joined the First Presby Irwin staff this past month as our new Child Care Supervisor. You will see her in the nursery every Sunday during Jumpstart and Refresh and the 10:30am worship service. Katie comes to us with 20+ years of early childhood development and is the current director of a head start childcare facility in Indiana, PA. She is a valued addition to our team!

### Christmas Treat Bakers Needed!



The Evangelism committee will be passing out cookies and coffee for Irwin's Cookie Tour on Thursday, December 5th. We are asking for your help by baking a batch of your favorite Christmas cookies to be shared with our community. They can be dropped off at the church either December 4th or 5th. If you are available and would like to help out that night, please call Sandy Kutz at 724-493-8246. Thank you in advance for helping make this event a success.



**GINGERBREAD  
HOUSE BAKE  
NIGHT!  
THURSDAY  
DEC. 4  
5PM**

It's  
**GINGERBREAD  
HOUSE TIME**

at First Presby Irwin

**SATURDAY  
DECEMBER 6  
1-3 PM**

**RSVP BY  
DECEMBER 4**

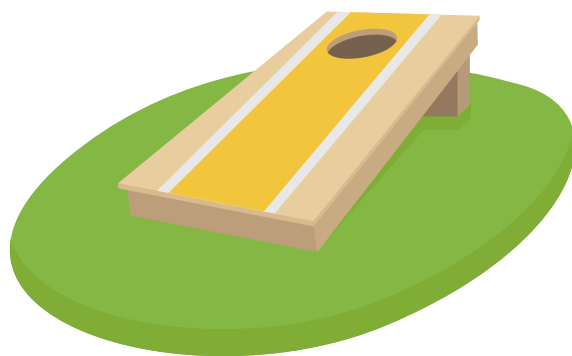






# CORNHOLE Tournament

A fun time was had by all at our first annual Family Cornhole Tournament held on November 7! Young and old alike, lots of laughs and good food was shared. Plan to make it with your team next year for a little friendly competition!



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRWIN**

## CHRISTMAS CAROL Singalong

Come sing along to your favorite carols and share a magical afternoon with family and friends.

**SUNDAY | 7 DECEMBER | 12 PM**

Immediately following Cheapest Lunch

MAY THE  
SPIRIT OF  
*Christmas*  
BE WITH YOU

## BOY SCOUT TROOP 284 CHRISTMAS TREE SALE

At Norwin Hills Busy Beaver  
1st 2 weekends in December  
**FRI | SAT | SUN**



# December Event Highlights

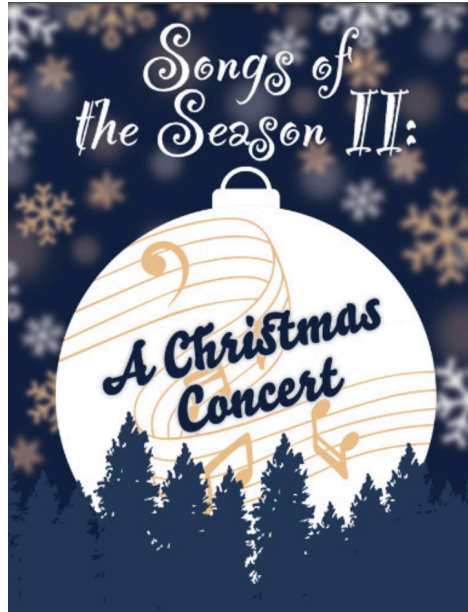


## Gingerbread HOUSES!

**BAKE NIGHT & ANNUAL BUILD**  
**Thursday, December 4 @ 5 PM**  
**Saturday, December 6 @ 1-3 PM**

SO MUCH FUN from baking all the pieces and making icing to setup for the event and building, this event is wonderful to be part of!

RSVPs for both by Thursday 12/4 to [heather@firstpresbyirwin.org](mailto:heather@firstpresbyirwin.org)



## St. Vincent Theater

***Songs of the Seasons***  
**Sunday, December 7**  
**Church Van leaves at 12:30 PM**

Featuring many classic Christmas songs, stories & holiday favorites of the holiday season. It will feature 4 or 5 professionals along with an ensemble of 8 students.

This Holiday show will be sure to put you in the Christmas spirit & mood!

# December Events

12/1 - Worship & Sacrament  
 12/2 - M Team  
 12/4 - Gingerbread House BAKE NIGHT  
 12/5 - Irwin Cookie Tour;  
 Angel Tree Gifts DUE  
 12/6 - GINGERBREAD HOUSE BUILD  
 12/7 - Cheapest Lunch;  
 Christmas Carol Singalong;  
 St. Vincent Songs of the Season  
 12/8 - Christian Ed  
 12/9 - Angel Tree Distribution;  
 Fellowship  
 12/10 - Stewardship & Finance  
 12/11 - D Team  
 12/13 - HME Distribution  
 12/14 - Munchkin Coffee Hour  
 12/16 - Circle 1  
 12/18 - Session Meeting  
 12/21 - Cookie Hour; Youth Choir Sings  
 12/23 - Circle 3  
 12/24 - **5PM & 7PM Worship Services**  
 12/27 - Blessing Board Pickups  
 12/28 - Deacons' Meeting  
 12/31 - Food Pantry Closed

## A Few Photos from Last Month!



The Blessing Board is in need of queen size sheets and blankets. Any donations of new or gently used bedding would be greatly appreciated.

## Phone Directory Update

We are currently updating our phone directory, and we need your help to ensure that it is accurate.

If your contact information has changed or needs correction, please let us know.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Please send all corrections to: [dan@firstpresbyirwin.org](mailto:dan@firstpresbyirwin.org)



# Prayer Requests

Marge Anke, John Anker, Jan Antos, John Carlson, Betty Comer, Noelle Daniels, Tom DiBiaslo, Scott Diffenderfer, Kristin DiMazio, Dian Duffner, Ron Durika & Family, John Duncan, Selma Duncan, Betsy Frye, Gerry, Megen Harmon, June Hart, Richard Himler, Inna & family, Becky Jadlocki, Joy Kalina, Wilbert Kelley, Kevin, Larry & Sharon Kramer, David Long, Paul M., Beverly Maloberti, Chad Manendo, Bill Martin, JoAnn Martz, Dan McCay Family, Kate McCorkle, JoAnn McKnight, J.Alan Minter, Isobel Nelson, Bryce Matthew Patrick, Kayli Payne, Rachel, Connie Steck Schade, Shirley Schmidtke, Frank Sherako, Addy Spehar, John Smith, Sherry Smith, Larry Stamford, Juanita Stromer, Gale Truman, Vanna Family, Bob Vaughn, Stella Waltemire, Mary Louise Whitehead, and Jeff Youell

If the person you placed on the prayer list has been **removed** or moved to **Praise and Thank You** in error, please contact either Taska Smola at [tasmola@verizon.net](mailto:tasmola@verizon.net) or Ginny Pellis at [Ginny@firstpresbyirwin.org](mailto:Ginny@firstpresbyirwin.org), with updated information. Thank you.

## Praise and Thank You

All God's People, Dan McCready, all Christmas shoeboxes

## Our Service Personnel

Staff Sgt. Zachary Coleman, SFC James Davis, Vaughn Estepp, Sgt. Luke Frye, Sgt. GY Sgt. Chris Keba, 2nd LT Andy Marlin, CDR Timothy Minor, Sgt. Noah Rady, Dominic Duke, Jeff Cmar and Connor Ramage

## Church Outreach Programs

Carpenter's Apprentice, The Blessing Board, Church Food Pantry, College Outreach project. Prayers for the volunteers and the families supported by these programs.



**From Brenda Daniels** - Thank you to the nine First Presby members who participated in a "Day of Blessing" at West Mifflin on Nov. 11. It was exciting that three of our newest team members were able to go. Ask Cheryl Kiser, Missy Smith and Diane Waddell about their experience. What a privilege to serve and pray for five families that day.

**From Georganne Edelman** - Thank you to all who made a shoebox for Operation Christmas Child. Thank you to Jan Holton and Brenda Daniels for checking boxes and getting them ready for shipping. Thank you to Earl and Cheryl Kiser for transporting the boxes to the shipping drop-off site.

**From Fred Westcoat** - I want to express my deepest thanks to all of you who have helped make these past seven months bearable. It's been a difficult time filled with illness, losing my driver's license, the loss of my brother, and lastly, my birthday... no secret now: 88! Through all of this, your kindness has lifted me.

I especially want to thank my children—Robin, Scott, and Warren—who stepped up in so many ways, with two of them traveling great distances to be here. My family here, plus so many others (too many to name, but you know who you are): the drivers, the shoppers, the meal makers, the card senders (sometimes more than one), the prayer warriors, and all who sent good wishes for healing... please know that every act of love meant more than I can say.

My church family is truly the greatest blessing a person could have. You have carried me through this difficult time with your generosity, your compassion, and your steady presence. Thank you, thank you, thank you—from the bottom of my heart.



Love and sympathy to the Stepanik family on the death of Karen Stepanik, who died October 28, 2025



Love and sympathy to Bonnie Wiegand and family on the death of her husband, Bill Wiegand, who died November 19, 2025.



Love and sympathy to Betsy Frye, family, and friends on the death of Wilbur Frye, who died November 22, 2025



Love and sympathy to Pat Copeland, family and friends on the death of Jack Copeland, who died November 23, 2025.

*Thank you for reading!*