



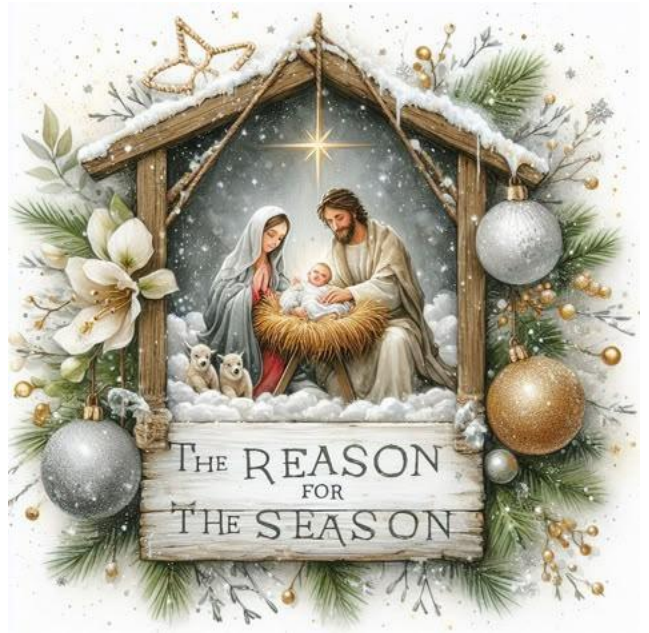
2235 Harrisburg Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601 – 717-394-1071

Facebook: Westgate American Baptist Church

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December
2025



Greetings in the Name of our Lord!

Last month, I shared poems about finding reasons to be grateful and thankful. This month is extra special, for it is the season not only to give thanks for all we have, but also to rejoice in the greatest gift of all—the gift of Jesus. Celebrating Christmas means commemorating His birth: a time to worship, reflect on our faith, and embrace the salvation He brings.

Christmas embodies the values of giving, love, and kindness. Families gather to share joy, create cherished memories, and treasure meaningful moments together. Yet it can also bring challenges—stress from unmet goals, the ache of lost loved ones, and the weight of loneliness. Whether you are filled with joy or navigating difficult times, **December is the perfect time to turn to prayer, seeking His guidance, blessings, and protection.** As you unwrap gifts and sit down for Christmas dinner with family and loved ones, please remember to bow your head and pray for those who are hungry, cold, sick, lonely, or hurting—those who need love and hope in their lives.

No matter your situation, faithfulness is the path to discovering love, peace, and joy. Remember, you are never alone when you carry Jesus in your heart.

I've found some beautiful poems, stories, and short quotes to share with you, and I hope they bring encouragement and delight.

Lora Shirey

The Journey to Bethlehem

Long ago, in Nazareth town,
A young girl heard a heavenly sound.
An angel came with news so bright,
“You’ll bear the Son, the world’s true light.”

Mary pondered, heart so true,
A humble maiden, chosen few.
With Joseph by her gentle side,
They traveled far, a long, slow ride.

To Bethlehem, the town so small,
No room was left to house them all.
In stable dark, with hay for bed,
A tiny Child, the Savior, laid His head.

The shepherds heard the angels sing,
Glory to God—the heavens ring!
They hurried forth with hearts ablaze,
To find the Babe and offer praise.

Wise men traveled from afar,
Guided by a shining star.
With gifts of gold and frankincense,
They knelt before Him in reverence.

Thus, in a quiet, simple place,
God showed the world His boundless grace.
Through Jesus born in manger low,
Hope and peace began to grow.



*Star of wonder, star of light,
Shine upon us through the night.
Lead us to the child so dear,
And fill our hearts with Christmas cheer.*

“Peace on earth will come to stay, when we live Christmas every day.”
— **Helen Steiner Rice**

“To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.” — **Calvin Coolidge**

The Teachings of Jesus

He walked the hills and shores with grace,
A gentle smile upon His face.
With words that healed, with hands that blessed,
He taught of love and faith expressed.

“Blessed are the meek,” He said,
“Those who hunger, the hungry fed.
Love your neighbor, do what's right,
Walk by faith and not by sight.”

The sick were healed, the blind could see,
The lost found hope and liberty.
He calmed the storm with just a word,
The crowds amazed, His voice they heard.

But not all welcomed what He shared,
Some hearts were hard, some people scared.
Yet still He gave His life to save,
To conquer death, the grave.

On Calvary's hill, with thorn-crowned head,
He bore our sins and pain instead.
Three days later, stones rolled away,
He rose in light, eternal Day.

Now every Christmas, hearts recall
The greatest gift of love to all:
Jesus Christ, our bright sunrise,
God's own Son, forever wise.

“Remember, if Christmas isn't found in your heart, you won't find it under a tree.”
- **Charlotte Carpenter**

“I wish we could put up some of the Christmas spirit in jars and open a jar of it every month.”- **Harlan Miller**



The Disciples' Call

Twelve were called to follow Him,
Fishermen and others grim.
Peter, James, and John so near,
Taught to love and conquer fear.

They walked with Jesus day by day,
He taught them how to live His way.
To preach, to heal, to spread the light,
To stand for truth and fight the night.

Though sometimes doubt would fill their hearts,
Their faith grew strong as love imparts.
From simple men to leaders bold,
Their story still is widely told.



The Last Supper

In a quiet room, on Passover night,
Jesus gathered His friends in the
candlelight.

He broke the bread, shared the wine,
“Remember Me,” He said, “this gift divine.”

A servant's heart, He showed them all,
Washing their feet, both great and small.
He spoke of love, of sacrifice near,
A new command to hold so dear.

“Take and eat, this is My flesh,
Drink this cup, My blood enmesh.”

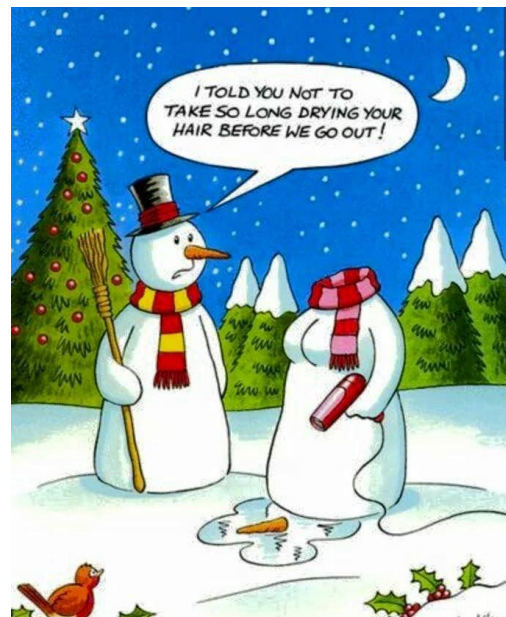
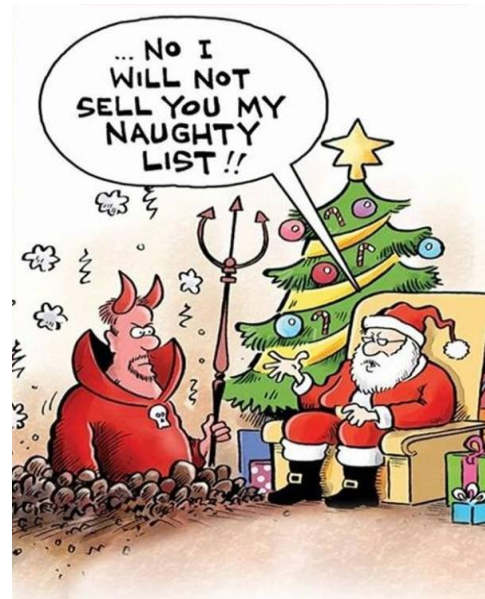
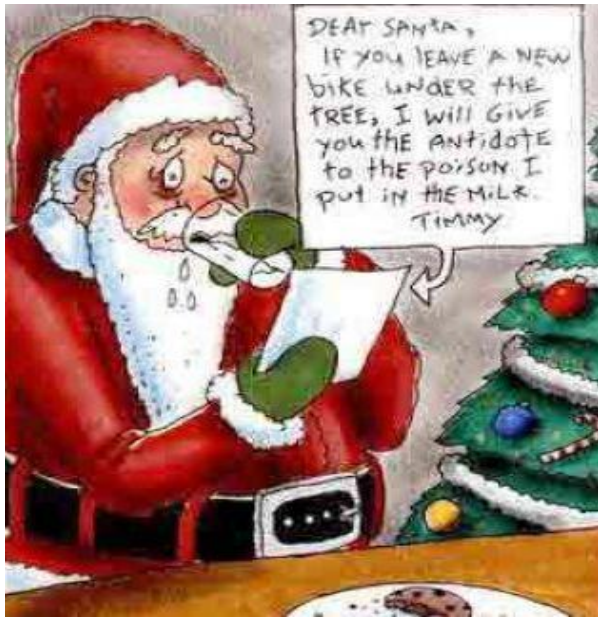
A moment sacred, full of grace,
Before He faced the cross's place.



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

— **Charles Dickens**

“Christmas is a season not only of rejoicing but of reflection.” — **Winston Churchill**



A Blessing!



I want to thank everyone who attended and helped make Andrews and Itti's wedding such a beautiful and memorable day. It was especially meaningful that Itti's father and brother were able to make the trip and attend in person, while her other family members joined through the live stream at home.

It's funny how you can meet someone and feel as though you've known them forever—that's exactly how I felt with her father and brother. We spent a week together, and it's a week I will never forget. Though their culture is quite different from ours, they truly felt like family.

They had a hard time adjusting to American food and preferred to eat rice three times a day. When I asked what I could make for dinner, they requested pork. Their faces lit up like Christmas morning when I placed a pork roast on the table. I asked her brother what kind of vegetable they would like with the meal, and he replied, "No vegetable—just pork and rice." I offered to prepare many different dishes, but they were happiest with that simple combination.

Itti's father doesn't speak or understand English, and while her brother translated at times, there were many moments when we were all gathered, laughing and sharing stories. Even without knowing what we were saying, her father laughed along with us, which made us laugh even harder.

Aside from the wedding, the highlight of their trip was visiting Washington, D.C. One of their requests upon coming to the States was to see the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. They hold deep respect, admiration, and love for Dr. King because of his religious roots, contributions, and leadership. I would have never guessed how widely he is known and admired across the world.

God is truly amazing. To bring two people together from opposite sides of the world—perfectly made for each other—and to unite their families as one is nothing short of a miracle that only He could accomplish.

After a week, it was tough saying goodbye to people who felt like family, even though we'd only met. Their trip home was an adventure in itself—flight delays, missed connections, and even getting lost in the airport in Japan. Two and a half days later, they finally made it home safely.

But here's the kicker: after all that chaos, they swore they felt safer battling airports, airplanes, and time zones than they did riding in the car with me. Apparently, my driving was the real thrill ride of their American vacation. Forget roller coasters—just buckle up with me behind the wheel!



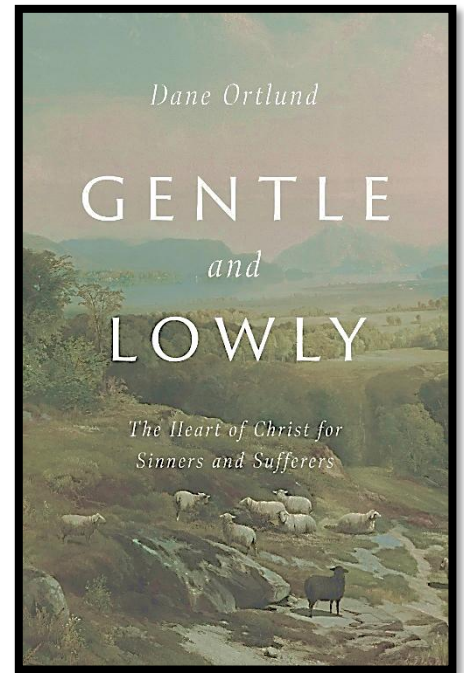
Sunday School

Please join us at 9:15 am for coffee, fellowship and learning as we spend time with the book Gentle and Lowly by Dane Ortland. Quoting from the book's inside cover "Christians know what Jesus Christ has done - but who is he? What is his deepest heart for his people, weary and faltering on their journey toward heaven? Jesus said he is 'gentle and lowly in heart'. This book reflects on these words, opening a neglected yet central truth about who he is for sinners and sufferers today."

Stephen Appleby will lead the study utilizing both video and discussion. Hope you can join in.

Book Summary: Gentle and Lowly by Dane Ortland

The book Gentle and Lowly by Dane Ortland is a profound exploration of the character of Christ, focusing on His gentleness and lowliness in heart. It draws from biblical texts to reveal Christ's affections for sinners and encourages believers on their journey. The book is written with pastoral gentleness and quiet beauty, offering comfort, strength, and rest to readers. It is a timely work that directs attention back to the person of Jesus, centering on the Scriptures and drawing upon the best of the Puritan tradition. Ortland reminds readers of Jesus's promises of rest and comfort, as well as the Bible's vision of Jesus as a kind and gracious King.



Ladies Bible Study.

Lead each Tuesday by Lynda Williams at 9:30 am in the Fellowship Hall

Join us as we gather for coffee, fellowship, prayer and study. We would love to study God's word with you!

Our current study "Women of the Bible"





Reformation Lutheran Church will gather at 5:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve for a candlelight service with communion, lifting hearts in praise and worship. We are warmly invited to join in this sacred celebration, giving thanks for the gift of Christ and rejoicing together in His presence.

It's that Merry time of year!

We are ordering poinsettia plants to be displayed in the sanctuary for Christmas. You may order one or more in memory or dedication to a loved one, then take it home for your own display after Christmas. Each one is \$10.00. Forms are included in the bulletins.



Together we remember

December also brings *The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offerings*

RMMO is a congregational offering and a joint project of ABCUSA and MMBB. Collected annually in December from participating congregations, RMMO funds are distributed as thank you checks to ABCUSA retired ordained ministers and commissioned missionaries who have devoted 15 years or more to our denomination, as well as surviving spouses. A certain portion is also allocated for direct emergency assistance. The offering originated in the mid-1930s as the Communion Fellowship Offering and since 1977 has been known as RMMO. Envelopes are in the bulletins.



Bible Quiz:

1) Mary, the mother of Jesus, went to visit her relative Elizabeth while they were both pregnant. Who did Elizabeth's son grow up to be?

- John the Baptist
- Matthew, the disciple
- Paul, the apostle
- Peter, the disciple

2) What did Elizabeth say to Mary during their visit?

- "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people."
- "The Mighty One has done great things for you; and holy is His name."
- "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God."
- "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

3) What was miraculous about Mary's pregnancy?

- The angel Gabriel watched over mother and baby the entire time.
- The angel Michael watched over mother and baby the entire time.
- She conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- She conceived despite being barren and advanced in age.

4) Jesus was born closest to which year?

- 10 B.C.
- 5 B.C.
- 0 A.D.
- 5 A.D.

5) Where was Jesus born?

- Nazareth
- Bethlehem
- Jerusalem
- Jericho



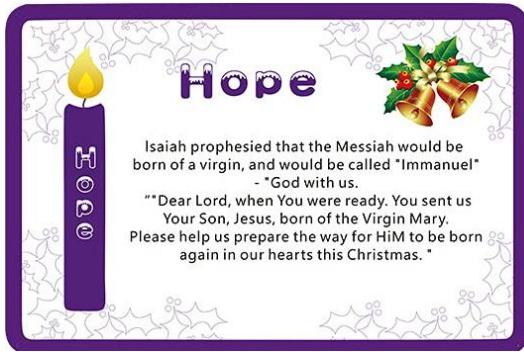
6) Why did Joseph and Mary give the baby the name Jesus?

- He was named after Joseph's brother.
- They were instructed to by an angel.
- It was suggested by Mary's cousin Elizabeth.
- It was foretold in the Book of Isaiah.

ANSWERS ON LAST PAGE – NO PEEKING

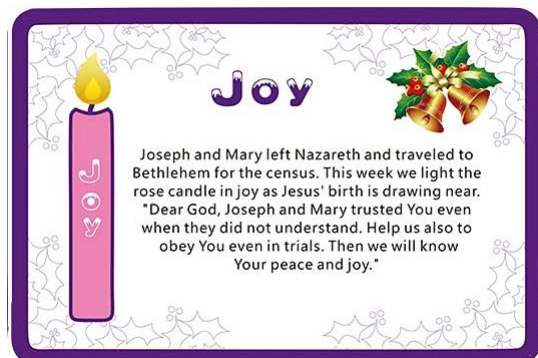
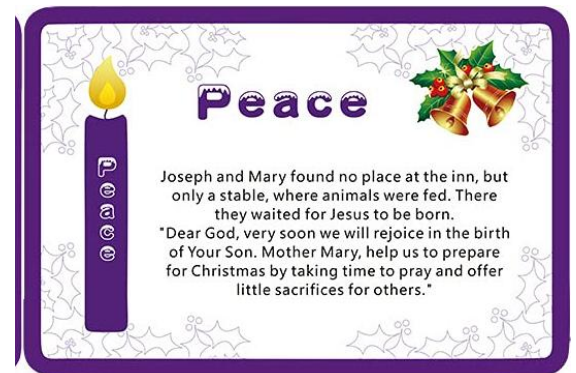
What is Advent?

Advent is a four-week season dedicated to reflective preparation for the arrival, "advent", of Jesus Christ's Nativity at Christmas time as well as Christ's expected return in the Second Coming. During this important event on the church calendar, each week of Advent focuses on a different theme - hope, peace, joy, and love. Christians from all denominations and backgrounds celebrate Advent in different ways but all focus on the anticipation of waiting for the arrival of Jesus.



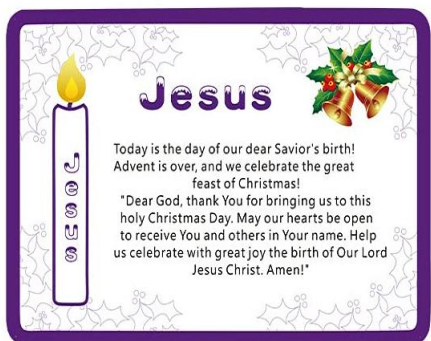
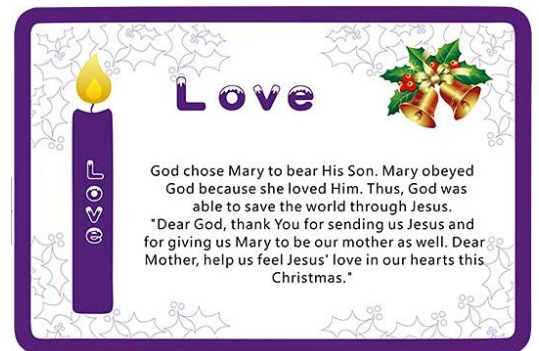
The Hope Advent Candle, also known as the "Prophet's Candle," symbolizes the anticipation of Christ's coming and the hope that His birth brings to the world.

The Peace Advent Candle, also known as the "Bethlehem candle" symbolizes the tranquility and harmony brought by the birth of Jesus Christ, representing the promise of peace in the Christian faith.



The Joy Advent candle, also known as the Shepherd Candle, symbolizes the joy that comes with the arrival of Jesus and is lit during the third week of Advent.

The Love Advent candle, typically the fourth candle in the Advent wreath, symbolizes God's unconditional love, as demonstrated through the birth of Jesus Christ.



The Jesus or Christ candle, is placed in the center of the wreath and lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to symbolize the arrival of Jesus, the Light of the World



Please check your email and mailboxes for the proposed budget and nominations for 2026.
A vote will be held on December 28th.



Reminder: If your address, phone number, or email has changed, please contact the office to update your contact information: Westgate2235@gmail.com



Don't forget to watch our Sunday services on our Facebook page and give us a thumbs up!

You can find us by typing in:
Westgate American Baptist church
And clicking on the profile with this picture





12/1 Leroy Tebie
12/4 Snow Bell
12/8 Cora Stump
12/13 Christian Saw
12/25 Charlene Martin
12/29 Ivy Sweigart



Bible Quiz: Answers

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John the Baptist

2) What did Elizabeth say to Mary during their visit?

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3) What was miraculous about Mary's pregnancy?

She conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

4) Jesus was born closest to which year?

5 B.C.

5) Where was Jesus born?

Bethlehem

6) Why did Joseph and Mary give the baby the name Jesus?

They were instructed to by an angel.



Merry Christmas