

## 2018 Advent and Christmas Worship Brainstorming “A Charlie Brown Advent”

November 5, 2018

The worship brainstorming will be held at David and Karen Booth’s house. We will have a prime rib “Christmas” dinner/potluck at 6:00 pm. Please bring a Christmassy dish to share. Brainstorming is from 7:00-9:30 pm.

Please try to read the message summary and scripture for each week and preview the videos if at all possible, even taking time to watch “A Charlie Brown Christmas” in its entirety at

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3qxtqb>.

Please RSVP to Karen Booth or church.



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### “A Charlie Brown Advent”

The true meaning of Christmas can get lost in a mostly self-imposed frenzy of activity and clutter. Like Charlie Brown, we struggle to find meaning in Christmas (or in life) and often look for it in all the wrong places. What can we learn from Charlie Brown and the rest of the Peanuts gang?

Alternate topics/approaches for each week in the series: 1) Come – discussions on the way to play practice. 2) Prepare – play practice. 3) Behold – tree purchase. 4) Rejoice – play speech.

#### Resources and articles:

- <http://www.reelworldtheology.com/50-years-of-a-charlie-brown-christmas/>
- <https://millertheology.wordpress.com/2012/12/10/a-charlie-brown-christmas/>
- <https://thinkchristian.reframemedia.com/why-a-charlie-brown-christmas-still-resonates-50-years-later>
- <https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2016/12/23/jew-catholic-and-midwestern-christian-behind-charlie-brown-christmas>
- <https://thejesuitpost.org/2012/12/charlie-brown-christmas-gospel-tale/>
- [http://experimentaltheology.blogspot.com/2007/12/everything-i-learned-about-christmas-i\\_04.html](http://experimentaltheology.blogspot.com/2007/12/everything-i-learned-about-christmas-i_04.html)
- [http://hca.gilead.org.il/fir\\_tree.html](http://hca.gilead.org.il/fir_tree.html) (Hans Christian Anderson tale - possible inspiration for Charlie Brown tree)
- <https://www.insideottawavalley.com/community-story/3977614-what-pig-pen-from-peanuts-means-to-me-at-christmas/from-1262015/>

#### Questions for the series:

- *Advent candles:* How do we incorporate Charlie Brown lessons into readings each week? Could we adapt the “next steps” for candle lighting liturgy?
- *Prayer journals:* We’ll introduce this in Advent with the hope that it will continue into the New Year. Perhaps one connection is that Charlie Brown’s search is a prayerful journey.

He tries to find the true meaning of the season by talking to his friends. How can we engage this season more prayerfully and soulfully instead of allowing it to be a hurried and soul-sucking time?

- *Charlie Brown nativity set*: I'll use this for Children's Time during Advent.
- *Christmas caroling*: Is there any interest in trying this?
- *Tree*: Do we have a way to re-create the classic Charlie Brown Christmas tree?  
<https://www.momentswithmandi.com/dollar-store-diy-charlie-brown-christmas-tree/>

**Visuals:**

- Charlie Brown Christmas on Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/karenpost55/charlie-brown-christmas/>
- Karen Post's Pinterest board: <https://www.pinterest.com/karenpost55/charlie-brown-christmas/>

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**December 2, 2018: "Charlie Brown: Searching for Meaning"**

Advent 1

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 19: 9-18 (VOICE)

**Narrator:** <sup>9</sup>When he (Elijah) arrived *at Horeb*, he walked into a cave and rested for the night.

**Eternal One (to Elijah):** Why are you here, Elijah? *What is it that you desire?*

**Elijah:** <sup>10</sup>*As you know*, all my passion has been devoted to the Eternal One, the God of *heavenly* armies. The Israelites have abandoned Your covenant with them, they have torn down *every single one of* Your altars, and they have executed by the sword all those who prophesy in Your name. I am the last *remaining prophet*, and they now seek to execute me as well.

**Eternal One:** <sup>11</sup>Leave this cave, and go stand on the mountainside in My presence.

**Narrator:** The Eternal passed by him. The mighty wind separated the mountains and crumbled every stone before the Eternal. *This was not a divine wind, for the Eternal was not within this wind. After the wind passed through, an earthquake shook the earth. This was not a divine quake, for the Eternal was not within this earthquake.* <sup>12-13</sup> After the earthquake was over, there was a fire. *This was not a divine fire, for the Eternal was not within this fire.*

*After the fire died out, there was nothing but the sound of a calm breeze. And through this breeze a gentle, quiet voice entered into Elijah's ears. He covered his face with his cloak and went to the mouth of the cave. Suddenly, Elijah was surprised.*

**Eternal One:** Why are you here, Elijah? *What is it that you desire?*

**Elijah:** <sup>14</sup>*As you know*, all my passion has been devoted to the Eternal God of *heavenly* armies. The Israelites have abandoned Your covenant *with them*, they have torn down *every one of* Your altars, and they have executed all who prophesy in Your name by the sword. I am the last *remaining prophet*, and they now seek to execute me as well. *They won't stop.*

**Eternal One:** <sup>15</sup>Travel back the same way you traveled here, but continue *north* to the desert of Damascus. There, I want you to anoint Hazael as Aram's king, <sup>16</sup>Jehu (Nimshi's son) as Israel's king, and Elisha (Shaphat's son from Abel-meholah) to replace you as prophet.

<sup>17</sup>Jehu will execute anyone who escapes from Hazael, and Elisha will execute all who

escape from Jehu. <sup>18</sup> I will keep for Myself the 7,000 Israelites who have not bowed down to Baal or offered him kisses.

**Synopsis:** Charlie Brown shares his feelings of emptiness with his friends, Linus and Lucy, who send him on a search for the true meaning of Christmas. Elijah's story echoes a similar search for God's presence. If we search for Jesus in the midst of the chaos of this season, we may miss him. We have to prepare our hearts in times of reflection and quiet to receive Jesus.

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:** Holy Communion. Candle lighting.

**Media possibilities:** Clip from "A Charlie Brown Christmas"

**Next steps:** What physical things will you search for this Christmas? What spiritual things will you search for? Where will you go to find them? Read 1 Kings 19: 11-18. Elijah was willing to start his search for God and continue searching when things didn't go as expected.

1. Start your search. Ask God to reveal Himself to you...*Loving God, in this Advent season I find myself empty and unfulfilled so today I begin to search for true meaning and your presence. Lead me in this journey and open my eyes and the eyes of my heart so that I may see You and be filled Amen.*
2. Continue searching. It takes time and a quieting of our lives to see God. Create that time and space and then don't give up the search.
3. Seek first God's Kingdom. Read Jesus Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 and the Parables of God's Kingdom in Matthew 13. Linger and seek God in silence a few minutes each day.

**Music:** "Christmas Time Is Here" (opening music from the movie); "Linus and Lucy" (dancing/theme song), Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus (UMH 196)

**Resource:** <http://www.bellefontefait.com/a-charlie-brown-christmas-the-search-sermon-from-11292015/>

**Discussion points:**

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**December 9, 2018: "Lucy: Let Go of Control"**

Advent 2

**Scripture:** Mark 1: 1-8 (John the Baptist was willing to give up control to pave the way for Jesus)

<sup>1</sup>This is the beginning of the good news of Jesus, the Anointed One, *the Liberating King*, the Son of God.

<sup>2</sup>Isaiah the prophet told us *what would happen before He came:*

Watch, I will send My messenger in front of You  
to prepare Your way and make it clear *and straight.*

<sup>3</sup>*You'll hear him*, a voice crying in the wilderness,

"Prepare the way of the Eternal One,  
a straight way in the wandering desert, a highway for our God."

<sup>4</sup>*That messenger was John the Baptist, who appeared in the desert near the Jordan River* preaching that people should be ritually cleansed through baptism *with water as a sign of* both their changed hearts and God's forgiveness of their sins. <sup>5</sup> People from across the countryside of Judea and from the city of Jerusalem came to him and confessed that they were deeply flawed and

needed help, so he cleansed them with the waters of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup> John dressed *as some of the Hebrew prophets had*, in clothes made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist. He made his meals *in the desert* from locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> He preached a message *in the wilderness*.

**John the Baptist:** Someone is coming who is a lot more powerful than I am—One whose sandals I'm not worthy to bend down and untie. <sup>8</sup> I've washed you here through baptism<sup>[1]</sup> with water; *but when He gets here*, He will wash you in the Spirit of God.

**Synopsis:** Lucy's desire for control (think her psychiatric help booth!) drives her to tell Charlie Brown to gain control of his life by directing the Christmas play. We want holiday celebrations to go well, but we can get too invested in a "picture perfect" Christmas. True happiness doesn't come when we control everything, but when we recognize our dependence on God and give up the need for control to God. This was John's message to those who came to him.

**Visuals:** Lucy's 5 cent psychiatric help stand

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:** Reaffirmation of Holy Baptism. Candle lighting.

**Media possibilities:** Clip from "A Charlie Brown Christmas" – about 5 minutes in (help stand) and/or 8 minutes in (play practice)

**Next steps:**

1. In what areas of the Christmas Season do you like to get your way and be in control? In what areas of life do you like to get your way and be in control?
2. Giving control back to God comes through repentance and repentance calls for confession and new life (baptism).  
Confession: What issues of control that are negative and destructive to your life and relationship can you identify? Acknowledge these and confess them to God.  
New Life: What one area of this holiday celebration can you give over control to someone else?
3. Christmas is often a time of making "to do" lists. This year make some "to be" lists. I will be in the moment, spending more time with my family, focused on joy, etc.
4. John the Baptist helped prepare people for Jesus. Who helped prepare you to hear and receive the grace of God through Jesus? Name and pray for one person you can help prepare to hear and receive the grace of God through Jesus. What one thing can you do this week to help prepare this person to accept Jesus as their Savior?

**Music:** Change My Heart, O God (FWS 2152)

**Resource:** <http://www.bellefontefait.com/a-charlie-brown-christmas-lucy-give-it-up-sermon->

**Discussion points:** 1) Pastor Mary will reference Genesis 2: 16-1, Adam and Eve wanting control of everything in their lives.

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**December 16, 2018: "Snoopy: Enjoy and Find Joy"**

Advent 3

**Scripture:** Isaiah 12: 2-6 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup>Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.

The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."

<sup>3</sup>With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. <sup>4</sup>In that day you will say:

“Give praise to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. <sup>5</sup>Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. <sup>6</sup>Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.”

**Scripture:** Philippians 4: 4-7 (TNIV)

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

<sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**Synopsis:** Snoopy finds happiness through decorating, dining, and dancing, none of which really lead to true joy or contentment, though they can be enjoyable. How do we both enjoy this season and focus on the deeper things that truly feed our spirits and bring joy?

**Visuals:** Snoopy’s dog house

**Hands-on item:** Snoopy cookie - [https://happybrownhouse.com/snoopy-cookies/#\\_a5y\\_p=4962107](https://happybrownhouse.com/snoopy-cookies/#_a5y_p=4962107)

**Activity:** Candle lighting.

**Media possibilities:** Clip from “A Charlie Brown Christmas”

**Next steps:** Snoopy found happiness in decorating, dining and dancing. Where do you look for happiness during the Christmas season? What things destroy this happiness?

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5: 16. God commands us to rejoice which means joy is not based on our circumstances or situations. Where can you find joy?
2. Read Psalm 5. What does it mean to take “refuge” in God? In what areas of life do you need to follow Jesus more closely? Jesus said he is the vine and we are the branches. How can you stay connected to Jesus this week and draw your life from him?
3. Joy also comes in knowing that we are unconditionally loved by God. Read the following Scripture that talk about God’s love for us: Isaiah 49: 15-16, 54: 10; Jeremiah 31: 3-6; Zephaniah 3: 16-17; John 3: 16-17; Romans 5: 1-8, 8: 28-30.
4. In what areas of your life do you need God’s love and protection to spread over you? Ask God for that help today.
5. Joy is also found in giving ourselves away. What act of service or sacrificial gift can you make during this season? Helping with the Christmas Dinner? Helping those in need through the Christmas Offering? Supporting Toys for Tots or another gift giving program?

**Music:** First Song of Isaiah (FWS 2030)

**Resource:** <http://www.bellefontefait.com/a-charlie-brown-christmas-snoopy-be-content-sermon-from-121315/>

**Discussion points:** 1) Pastor Mary will also reference Zephaniah 3: 17, John 3: 16-17, and 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18.

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**Mon., Dec. 17, 2018 at 7:00 pm: “Christmas Is Coming, and I’m Not Happy”**  
Blue Christmas

**Scripture:** Isaiah 9: 2-6 (CEV)

<sup>2</sup>Those who walked in the dark have seen a bright light.

And it shines upon everyone who lives in the land of darkest shadows.

<sup>3</sup>Our Lord, you have made your nation stronger. Because of you, its people are glad and celebrate like workers at harvest time or like soldiers dividing up what they have taken.

<sup>4</sup>You have broken the power of those who abused and enslaved your people. You have rescued them just as you saved your people from Midian. <sup>5</sup>The boots of marching warriors and the blood-stained uniforms have been fed to flames and eaten by fire.

<sup>6</sup>A child has been born for us. We have been given a son who will be our ruler. His names will be Wonderful Advisor and Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace.

**Scripture:** Matthew 1: 18-25 (CEV)

<sup>18</sup>This is how Jesus Christ was born. A young woman named Mary was engaged to Joseph from King David's family. But before they were married, she learned that she was going to have a baby by God's Holy Spirit.

<sup>19</sup>Joseph was a good man and did not want to embarrass Mary in front of everyone. So he decided to quietly call off the wedding.

<sup>20</sup>While Joseph was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, the baby that Mary will have is from the Holy Spirit. Go ahead and marry her. <sup>21</sup>Then after her baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

<sup>22</sup>So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, <sup>23</sup>"A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be called Immanuel," which means "God is with us."

<sup>24</sup>After Joseph woke up, he and Mary were soon married, just as the Lord's angel had told him to do. <sup>25</sup><sup>f</sup> But they did not sleep together before her baby was born. Then Joseph named him Jesus.

**Synopsis:** *Christmas time is here. Happiness and cheer. Fun for all that children call their favorite time of year.* The lyrics from the opening song of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" ring hollow for many of us, but we resonate with Charlie Brown's honesty. We don't feel happiness or cheer because of different life circumstances. Jesus knows the depth of our pain because he is Emmanuel - God with us. How can we acknowledge those feelings and find the only true source of hope and joy?

**Visuals:** Lucy's 5 cent psychiatric help stand

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:** Candle lighting. Anointing with oil. Hands-on prayer.

**Media possibilities:**

- Clip from "A Charlie Brown Christmas" – about 5 minutes in (help stand)
- "Cocoon." Length: 2:35. Cost: \$20.00. A modern day psalm of grief and loss. Available with no title. <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/72528/cocoon>.

**Music:** "Christmas Time Is Here", O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (UMH 211)

Christmas time is here	Olden times and ancient	And joyful memories there
Happiness and cheer	rhymes	
Fun for all that children call	Of love and dreams to share	Christmas time is here
Their favorite time of year		families drawing near
	Sleigh bells in the air	Oh, that we could always see
Snowflakes in the air	Beauty everywhere	Such spirit through the year
Carols everywhere	Yuletide by the fireside	

Sleigh bells in the air  
beauty everywhere  
yuletide by the fireside

and joyful memories there  
Christmas time is here

families drawing near  
oh that we could always see  
such spirit in the year

**Discussion points:**

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**December 23, 2018: “Sally: Seeking Real Peace”**

Advent 4

**Scripture:** Luke 1: 26-56 (VOICE)

**Narrator:** <sup>26</sup> Six months later in Nazareth, a city in *the rural province of Galilee*, the heavenly messenger Gabriel made another appearance. This time the messenger was sent by God <sup>27</sup> to meet with a virgin named Mary, who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David himself. <sup>28</sup> The messenger entered her home.

**Messenger:** Greetings! You are favored, and the Lord is with you! [Among all women on the earth, you have been blessed.]

<sup>29</sup> The heavenly messenger’s words baffled Mary, and she wondered what type of greeting this was.

<sup>30</sup> Mary, don’t be afraid. You have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> Listen, you are going to become pregnant. You will have a son, and you must name Him “Savior,” *or Jesus.* <sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Jesus will become the greatest among men. He will be known as the Son of the Highest God. God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David, <sup>33</sup> and He will reign over the covenant family of Jacob forever.

**Mary:** <sup>34</sup> But I have never been with a man. How can this be possible?

**Messenger:** <sup>35</sup> The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The Most High will overshadow you. That’s why this holy child will be known, *as not just your son, but also* as the Son of God.

<sup>36</sup> *It sounds impossible*, but listen—you know your relative Elizabeth has been unable to bear children and is now far too old to be a mother. Yet she has become pregnant, *as God willed it*. Yes, in three months, she will have a son. <sup>37</sup> So the impossible is possible with God.

**Mary (deciding in her heart):** <sup>38</sup> Here I am, the Lord’s humble servant. As you have said, let it be done to me.

**Narrator:** And the heavenly messenger was gone. <sup>39</sup> Mary immediately got up and hurried to the hill country, in the province of Judah, <sup>40-41</sup> where her cousins Zacharias and Elizabeth lived. When Mary entered their home and greeted Elizabeth, who felt her baby leap in her womb, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Elizabeth (shouting):** <sup>42</sup> You are blessed, *Mary*, blessed among all women, and the child you bear is blessed! <sup>43</sup> And blessed I am as well, that the mother of my Lord has come to me! <sup>44</sup> As soon as I heard your voice greet me, my baby leaped for joy within me.

<sup>45</sup> How fortunate you are, Mary, for you believed that what the Lord told you would be fulfilled.

**Narrator:** Mary is deeply moved by these amazing encounters—first with the messenger and then with her cousin, Elizabeth. Mary’s response can’t be contained in normal prose; her noble soul overflows in poetry. And this poetry isn’t simply religious; it has powerful social and political overtones. It speaks of a great reversal—what might be



called a social, economic, and political revolution. To people in Mary's day, there is little question as to what she is talking about. The Jewish people are oppressed by the Roman Empire, and to speak of a King who will demote the powerful and rich and elevate the poor and humble means one thing: God is moving toward setting them free! Soon Zacharias will overflow in poetry of his own.

**46 Mary:** My soul lifts up the Lord! <sup>47</sup> My spirit celebrates God, my Liberator!  
<sup>48</sup> For though I'm God's humble servant, God has noticed me.  
Now and forever, I will be considered blessed by all generations.  
<sup>49</sup> For the Mighty One has done great things for me; holy is God's name!  
<sup>50</sup> From generation to generation, God's lovingkindness endures for those who revere Him.  
<sup>51</sup> God's arm has accomplished mighty deeds.  
The proud in mind and heart, God has sent away in disarray.  
<sup>52</sup> The rulers from their high positions of power, God has brought down low.  
And those who were humble and lowly, God has elevated with dignity.  
<sup>53</sup> The hungry—God has filled with fine food.  
The rich—God has dismissed with nothing in their hands.  
<sup>54</sup> To Israel, God's servant, God has given help,  
<sup>55</sup> As promised to our ancestors, remembering Abraham and his descendants in mercy forever.

**Narrator:** <sup>56</sup> Mary stayed with Elizabeth *in Judea* for the next three months and then returned to her home *in Galilee*.

**Synopsis:** Sally's focus is on getting, and she believes that more presents (or money) mean happiness. Where will we find real peace? Mary's encounter with the angel, her obedience, and her song remind us that God works in ways we don't expect. God didn't come to be with us in power, but in powerlessness. When we reject worldly power (even more stuff!) and worship God, we find peace now and for the future.

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:** *Cantata at 9:00 a.m. service.* Candle lighting.

**Media possibilities:** clip from "A Charlie Brown Christmas" – about 8 minutes in

**Music:** "Christmas Time Is Here", Give Thanks (FWS 2036)

**Next steps:**

1. Growing up what gift did you think you just had to have in order for life to be complete? Did you receive it? How long did the peace and fulfillment last?
2. What gift do you want this year? Is it something that will bring true peace?
3. Read the story of Mary in Luke 1: 26-56.
4. Mary experienced true peace because she surrendered herself to God.
  - a. What would complete surrender look like in your life?
  - b. What area do you struggle to give to God?
  - c. What can you do this Christmas to draw closer to God?
5. Peace for Mary came in knowing that:
  - a. God knows us (Luke 1:48)



- i. Do you find this scary or encouraging? Why?
- ii. What hope and dream can you share with God?
- b. God will do great things in us (Luke 1:49)
  - i. What great thing has God already done in you?
  - ii. What great thing would you like God to do in you?
- c. What great thing can you do between now and Christmas? Prayer? Giving? Faith Sharing?
  - i. God will lift us up (Luke 1:52)
  - ii. Humble yourself before God in worship and prayer.
  - iii. Think of others before yourself during the Christmas Celebration.

**Resource:** <http://www.bellefontefait.com/a-charlie-brown-christmas-sally-true-peace-sermon-from-12212015/>

**Discussion points:**

**Mon., Dec. 24, 2018 at 5:30 pm: “A Charlie Brown Tree”**

Christmas Eve

**Scripture:** Luke 1: 1-20 (NRSV - Birth of Jesus) - Linus reads Luke 2: 8-14

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.

<sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Scripture:** Psalm 96 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

<sup>2</sup>Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

<sup>3</sup>Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

<sup>4</sup>For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

<sup>5</sup>For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

<sup>6</sup>Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

<sup>7</sup>Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

<sup>8</sup>Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

<sup>9</sup>Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

<sup>10</sup>Say among the nations, "The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity."

<sup>11</sup>Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; <sup>12</sup>let the field exult, and everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy <sup>13</sup>before the LORD; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 9: 1-7 (CEV)

<sup>1</sup> But those who have suffered will no longer be in pain.<sup>f</sup> The territories of Zebulun and Naphtali in Galilee were once hated. But this land of the Gentiles across the Jordan River and along the Mediterranean Sea will be greatly respected.

**Synopsis:** When it's time for Charlie Brown to pick out a tree, he chooses a scraggly little tree that droops when a single ornament is added, something his friends aren't expecting. Once the gang surrounds Charlie Brown and the tree in love, it is transformed. God works in unexpected ways also, sending a Savior in Jesus, a baby born to a humble family in a humble place and angels sharing Good News with humble people first.

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:** A Charlie Brown Christmas Eve Quiz <http://www.bellefontefait.com/a-charlie-brown-christmas-the-tree-sermon-from-christmas-eve-12242015/> or a Charlie Brown tree (right)

**Activity:** Lighting candles

**Media possibilities:** Clip from "A Charlie Brown Christmas"  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPhqMJpQsYQ>)

**Music:** #240 "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

**Resource:** <http://www.bellefontefait.com/a-charlie-brown-christmas-the-tree-sermon-from-christmas-eve-12242015/>

**Discussion points:**

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**Mon., Dec. 24, 2018 at 11:00 pm: "A Charlie Brown Tree"**

**Scripture:** Luke 1: 1-20 (Birth of Jesus) - Linus reads Luke 2: 8-14, Psalm 96, Isaiah 9: 1-7

**Synopsis:** See above

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:** Holy Communion, lighting candles

**Media possibilities:**

**Discussion points:**



**Scripture:** Matthew 2: 13-23 (TNIV) Escape to Egypt and return to Nazareth

<sup>13</sup>When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

<sup>14</sup>So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, <sup>15</sup>where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

<sup>16</sup>When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. <sup>17</sup>Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

<sup>18</sup>"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning,

Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

<sup>19</sup>After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt <sup>20</sup>and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

<sup>21</sup>So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup>But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, <sup>23</sup>and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."

**Scripture:** Colossians 3: 12-17 (TNIV)

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

<sup>13</sup>Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup>And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

<sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Synopsis:** Linus was the messenger of the Gospel to the Peanuts gang, but his rough ride down the sledding hill and his attempts to keep the real meaning of Christmas in front of his friends was challenging. Jesus' birth and early life were not a quiet and peaceful time either; he and his family were in danger and had to escape King Herod. As we enter a new calendar year, how is God calling us to claim the true meaning of Christmas and live as people who follow Jesus?

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:** Clips from "It's Christmas Time Again" - sledding hill and conversation between Linus and Sally <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x56pskl>

**Music:**

### **Next Steps**

1. Read the story of all that Mary and Joseph faced after Jesus was born, Matthew 2. Identify all the ways God was at work even though Mary and Joseph may not have seen it.
2. God worked through stars and dreams – things we might take for granted and seem insignificant. What simple things might God use in your life during 2019 to speak to you? What one thing can you do to help pay more attention to these things?
3. Resolve to be in worship during the month of January to learn about what it means to be a neighbor.
4. How does Jesus spending His young life as a refugee shape your thinking about the current refugee crisis facing our world? How does it shape your political thoughts as we wrestle with this as a country?
5. We are refugees living in a foreign land because our home is the Kingdom of God. To keep a refugee mindset in the coming year we need to:
  - a. Keep our eyes, minds, and hearts focused on the Kingdom of God. Read Philippians 4:8.
  - b. Leave everything behind. What do you need to leave behind as you move into this New Year?

**Resource:** <http://www.bellefontefait.com/charlie-brown-a-rocky-start-sermon-from-12272015/>

**Discussion points:**