



“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” -- John Wesley



And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.
Luke 2:7 NIV

For those of you, like me, who have been on Earth for many years, do you have fond memories from Christmas time when you were young. I have to admit, most of my memories as a kid weren't really exciting. It was opening presents from my parents and from Santa, then going to my grandparent's house (on my mom's side of the family) for a huge meal and then opening more presents. The memory that sticks out to me was the only year that I didn't celebrate in Illinois.

When I was either 13 or 14 we loaded up the car, along with my grandma (on my dad's side) and drove to Utah to celebrate. The memory of driving through Wyoming an hour or two before the roads were closed due to heavy snow. My brother and I sleeping in our Aunt and Uncle's RV. And sharing Christmas with family that we didn't see often.

Have you notice something was missing in my youth during this time of year? Unless my memory is fading (and that is quite possible), I don't remember the joy that the Advent season brings. The anticipation of celebrating the birth of the one TRUE King. While I spent years in my youth attending Sunday School, I never lit a candle on the Advent wreath, and I never attended a candlelight service on Christmas Eve. Writer's note: My mom reads the newsletter, so if she reminds me that I did do either of these, I will let you know in next month's article.

When I re-dedicated my life to Jesus in March 2004, my thoughts on the Christmas season completely changed! While I still give gifts to family and friends, and enjoy seeing children's eyes light up while opening gifts, this season to me is more about the anticipation of celebrating the birth of a baby born of a virgin and her husband. God in the flesh, coming to Earth to save all of us by eventually taking away all of our sins. I went to my first candlelight service while in my 40's at my home church and cried when I tilted my candle to light it. The same thing happened when I led my first candlelight service as a Pastor.

This year I am sharing an Advent series that looks at Jesus as the light of the world who shines on us with his amazing grace. I will share the stories of four people in the Bible and how their lives reveal the gifts of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love for us today. The series starts on December 3rd, I invite all to come and hear these stories.

May the remembrance of a child, born in a lowly stable just over 2,000 years ago be with all of you as you enjoy this season. And may God Bless all of you every day.

Pastor Keith



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Salina Fireman's Breakfast

1st Sunday of every month -
December 3, January 7,
February 4, & March 3

**ALL YOU CAN EAT**

Breakfast at the station

from 8am - 11:30am.

Adult all you can eat plates \$12 &

Kids prices \$8

Biscuits & Gravy, Eggs, Bacon, Sausage, Pancakes,
French Toast, Toast, OJ, milk, & coffee.

And as always - It's the BEST breakfast in town!



I was truly surprised that my family planned a 90th birthday party for me and kept it a secret. Thank you to those who showered me with cards and gifts.

Your presence gave me joy to see many and from so many different states.

God Bless, Allen Messer

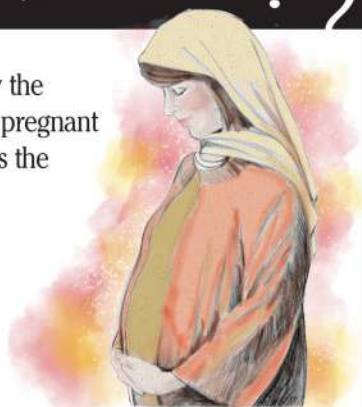
December Memory Verse

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29

Bible Quiz

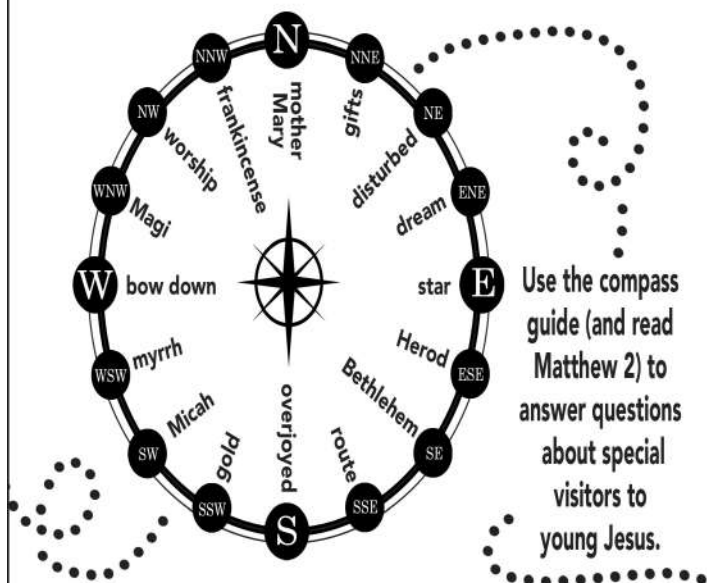
Elizabeth, an older relative of Mary the mother of Jesus, was miraculously pregnant at the same time as Mary. What was the name of Elizabeth's husband?

- A. Aaron
- B. Zechariah
- C. Joseph
- D. Simeon



Answer: B (See Luke 1:5, 39-41)

Puzzle!



Use the compass guide (and read Matthew 2) to answer questions about special visitors to young Jesus.

- Who was king at the time of Jesus' birth? _____ (ESE)
- Who came from the East to worship the one born king of the Jews? _____ (WNW)
- How did King Herod feel about Jesus' birth? _____ (NE)
- Which prophet did the chief priests and teachers of the law quote when King Herod asked where the Christ would be born? _____ (SW)
- In what city would Christ be born? _____ (SE)
- King Herod lied to the wise men, telling them to search and report back so he, too, could do what to Christ? _____ (NW)
- What did the Magi see in the east and follow to find Jesus? _____ (E)
- When the star stopped, how did the Magi feel? _____ (S)
- Who else did the Magi see with Jesus? His _____ (N)
- Before they worshiped the child, what did the Magi do? _____ (W)
- Name the three treasures the Magi brought for Jesus.
_____ (SSW) _____ (NNW) _____ (WSW)
- These three treasures were all brought for Jesus as _____ (NNE)
- What warned the Magi not to return to Herod? A _____ (ENE)
- The Magi had to return to their country by another _____ (SSE)

Answers: 1. Herod; 2. Magi; 3. disturbed; 4. Micah; 5. Bethlehem; 6. worship; 7. star; 8. overjoyed; 9. mother Mary; 10. bow down; 11. gold; 12. gifts; 13. dream; 14. route

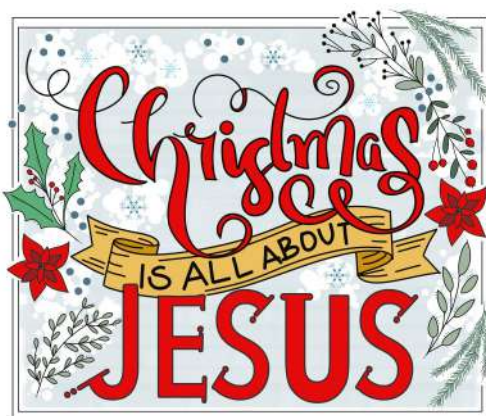
Thank-you

What a blessing we received at our Community Thanksgiving Service on Sunday, November 12. There were nearly 40 in attendance to hear the message that our guest, Lisa Rigoni, shared with us. We were able to send \$476 (including a Love Offering of \$276) back with Lisa to help support the ongoing needs of Midwest Mission.

Thanks also goes to our volunteer choir and all the musicians that provided music for us. Their songs of Thanksgiving were a reminder of not only what this holiday season is about but how we should be grateful all year long for what the Lord is doing in our lives. Thank you to all the rest that assisted in helping with the service.

Let's continue to keep the Midwest Mission in our prayers as they continue to answer God's call to help those in need. May you all have a blessed Thanksgiving with friends and family.

Your NOW committee
Joyce Cochran - Chairperson



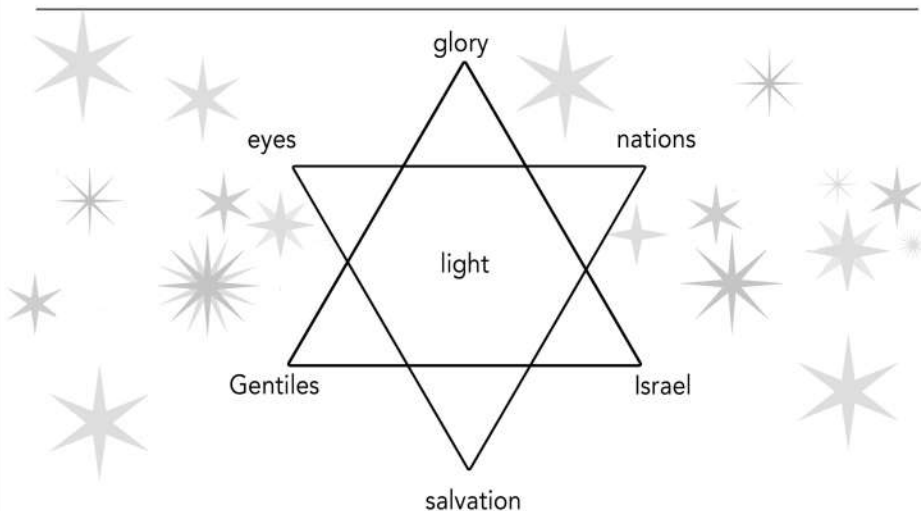
Merry CHRISTMAS



SIMEON'S SIGHT

When Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the temple, they heard a special prophecy from Simeon.

Directions: Using the star key, write the words in the correct spaces to complete Luke 2:30-32, NIV.



"For my _____ have seen your _____, which you have prepared in the sight of all _____: a _____ for revelation to the _____, and the _____ of your people _____."

Luke 2:30-32, NIV

Answers: eyes, salvation, nations, light, Gentiles, Israel, glory, Israel



Pastor Keith invites you to join in praying for the following names and causes.

From Our Church Bulletin: Candy Bauer, Mel Brinkman, Jay Buente, Ron Cordes, Benny Cruse, Donna Diefenbach, Virginia Dittus, Herb Foltz, Rick Gaffield, Vickie Gaffield, Marjorie Kersch, Maggie Maxwell (Bob Nichols' sister), Allen Messer, Marilyn Ohrt, Dave Parks, Harry & Sharon Pfeiffer, Sunshine Powell, Dorothy Riegel, Stan Stone, Marion Wenzelman, Stan Wenzelman, & Ronald Wildman.

Arden Courts

Mel Brinkman

Courtyard Estate of Herscher

Marjorie Kersch
Randy Riegel
Ralph Grob

At College

Jenna Kenning
Isabell Lowey
Kamden Lockwood

Heritage Woods

V1 Morse

Compassion International Kids

Ebenezer Forson.....Ghana
Melany Samantha.....Aguilera
Sonaton Soren.....Bangladesh
Janny Boya.....Ecuador
Witney Juarez.....Guatemala
Janny Boya.....Ecuador
Lucky Hubiagbe.....Ghana

Do you or your family sponsor a compassion international kid? If so, please contact the office at 815-802-9805 or bonfieldgp@gmail.com.



Don't miss out!: In his poem "The Inn That Missed Its Chance," Amos R. Wells writes from the perspective of the "fairly crazed" innkeeper who recalls Bethlehem becoming "a hive at swarming-time." Of the couple who requested shelter on what became Christmas Eve, the proprietor asks, "Could I know that they were so important?"

There was a sign, they say, a heavenly light resplendent; but I had no time for stars.
And there were songs of angels in the air out on the hills; but how was I to hear amid the thousand clamors of an inn?

If the innkeeper had only known Jesus' true identity, he says, he would have turned the place upside down, sending other guests out to the stables instead. When Jesus returns — "as he will surely come" — the anonymous innkeeper wants everyone to know: "Tell my Lord that all my inn is his, to make amends."



+Christian Symbol+

ROSE — This flower, often shown as stylized artwork, is a symbol for Advent, the promise of the Messiah and Jesus' nativity. A white rose represents the Virgin Mary, and a red rose stands for martyrs. A wreath of roses symbolizes heavenly joy.



OCTOBER 2023 ATTENDANCE

	10/1	10/8	10/15	10/22	10/29
Evangelical	30	34	43	36	30
Grand Prairie	22	14	14	22	24
Total	52	48	57	58	54



United
Women
in Faith

United Women in Faith of the Parish

Purpose of the United Women in Faith -The organized unit of United Women in Faith shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in global ministries of the church.

Martha Circle - Grand Prairie UMC – Women of Faith

The Grand Prairie United Women of Faith meeting was held on November 8, at the home of Tricia Coffman with a pajama party theme. There were 9 members present. Tricia opened the meeting with devotion at 6:00PM, followed by a very tasty meal. The Secretary and Treasurer reports were given, and approved as read. Lisa Rigoni, Development Manager, from Midwest Mission will be our speaker for the community Thanksgiving service on November 12, 2023, held at Grand Prairie Church; beginning at 4:00 PM. Lisa will be speaking on how Midwest Mission serves throughout the world. A LOVE offering will be taken. Midwest Mission has a list of their items they collect for their different kits, (i.e., feminine hygiene, baby layettes, cleaning supplies), on the Amazon website. Items can be purchased and sent directly to Midwest Mission. The Wesley Foundation (MERGE) at ISU campus has had their funding cut substantially. The group is asking all churches in the conference to donate \$200 to make up the difference. Cunningham Children's Home is asking for gift card donations from Amazon or Walmart. Catholic Charities sponsors a "Share the Warmth" program pairing seniors with community members to provide Christmas presents for seniors who may be alone during the holidays. Our next meeting is December 13, at the Ohrt Party Shed. Members then filled 25 Operation Christmas Child boxes to be sent overseas. Cindy Erdmann, Secretary

2023 Meetings: December 13 - Hostess Kim O. & Marilyn O.

We had such a good time! Thanks for coming to our pajama party and filling 26 boxes for Operation Christmas Child! So thankful for this wonderful group!



United Women in Faith of the Parish

Sunshine Circle - Sunshine Circle met on Thurs., November 16 at 6:30 pm. Vice Pres. Vickie requested that Pastor Keith give blessing for the evening meal (soup, salad and sandwiches). The meeting was hosted by Rita, Jodi and Lorraine. Rita read an article called "5 Kernels", reminding us to be thankful for God's love, for the people who make up this world, for taking care of our family and friends, for the beauty all around us and to be thankful for all of God's blessings! Scripture readings were Luke 7:11-19, Psalms 92:1 (Praise the Lord!), and Psalm 107:21-22. Attendance was taken. 7 members were present. Absent were Donna, Kim and Jodi. Jan read the October minutes, there is one change. The planned Christmas celebration on Dec. 21 at Evan has been changed to a "dinner-out" event TBA. To date, several holiday mission projects are in progress. Praise God!! Hats, gloves and scarves are still being collected for the Cunningham Children's Home. Please bring these items by Dec. 7th. Pastor Keith will take them on Dec. 8th. Donations have been given to our local Harbor House and to The Salvation Army. The Salvation Army is also requesting new toys and pajamas which will be given out at their Christmas party to children in the Kankakee area. Please give any donations to Kim or Jan by Dec. 7 or drop off at their office. (Call first!). Closer to home, a family in our area will be blessed this Christmas! Members may give wrapped gifts to Kim by Dec. 8th, Two poinsettias will be given to Evan for Christmas Rita closed with prayer. 1 Chronicles 16:34 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; His love endures forever. Happy Thanksgiving.



Evan UWF - WHAT: The United In Faith and friends will be having a **Christmas lunch** everyone is invited, both women and men. If you haven't already signed up on the sign-up sheet, contact Carol Buente 815-450-7402 or Linda Meyer 815-263-9871 to let us know you'd like to come.

WHERE: the Herscher Restaurant & Pub

WHEN: Thursday, December 14th at 11:30 am

Everyone is invited, both men and women. You will be able to order off the menu at your own expense. We already have 13 signed up! Come and join us for some good food and fellowship as we get closer to Christmas!

Your Light Has Come: In the introduction to his book *For All God's Worth*, theologian N.T. Wright says, "Christmas is God lighting a candle, and you don't light a candle in a room that's already full of sunlight. You light a candle in a room that's so murky that the candle, when lit, reveals just how bad things really are. The light shines in the darkness, says St. John, and the darkness has not overcome it."





For that reason, Wright explains, Christmas isn't a dream or a momentary escape but reality. And the same is true for Christianity. "Either Jesus is the Lord of the world and all reality makes sense in his life, or he is dangerously irrelevant to the problems and possibilities of today's world," he adds. "There is no middle ground. Either Jesus was, and is, the Word of God, or he, and the stories Christians tell about him, are lies."



A CHRIST-CENTERED CHRISTMAS ADVENT READING PLAN

Explore the true meaning of Christmas as you travel through God's Word. Discover God's promises he fulfilled through the birth of His only Son, the **KING OF KINGS**.



1 Isaiah 7:14

2 Isaiah 9:6-7

3 Malachi 3:1

4 Micah 5:2-4

5 Luke 1:5-7

6 Luke 1:10-15

7 Luke 1:18-22

8 Luke 1:24-25

9 Luke 1:26-29

10 Luke 1:30-33

11 Luke 2:1-5

12 Luke 2:6-7

13 Luke 2:8-14

14 Luke 2:15-20

15 Matthew 1:18-21

16 Matthew 1:22-25

17 Matthew 2:1-3

18 Matthew 2:4-6

19 Matthew 2:7-9

20 Matthew 2:10-12

21 Romans 15:13


22 Galatians 4:4-5

23 Philippians 2:8-11

24 James 1:16-18

25 John 3:16

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Thank You Bonfield-Grand Prairie Parish Area for your giving. Yes we are collecting 2024 calendars. We have a supply of Christmas cards, but we will take more. Last year we gave suckers with the cards and that was good! A 300 bag of smaller suckers from WalMart north was around \$17. Would anyone like to donate either a bag of suckers or any amount of money to help this cause? Joy Bland will collect at Evan and Janet in Grand Prairie. The smaller suckers work better for the veterans. GOD LOVES YOU!



Advent meanings: During Advent, which begins this year on December 3, many churches and families use wreaths to symbolize watchfulness and increasing joy as Christmas approaches.

Colors for the candles vary, with some traditions using blue (for hope or creation) and others preferring purple (for royalty, humility or penitence).

The four candles that each represent a week in Advent also signify hope, peace, joy and love. (The third candle is often pink.) In the center is the white Christ candle, representing Jesus as the light of the world. That candle is lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

The round, green Advent wreath has special meaning of its own. It symbolizes eternal life and the unending love of God, who sent his only Son to earth to die in our place.

Holiday humor: Much planning and preparation goes into worship during December. But that doesn't mean Christmas services and pageants are always picture-perfect. For anyone who's experienced holiday chaos (who hasn't?!), take comfort in knowing you're not alone.

Church leaders who shared stories with Outreach magazine describe an alarming number of Christmas candle vs. hair incidents. Here's what else has transpired:

- One pastor was sharing the Nativity story when he bumped the button on his singing Christmas tie, which didn't have a mute button. So congregants had to listen to the entire verse and chorus of "Jingle Bells."
- A child discovered a live mouse in his chocolate-filled gift bag on Christmas Eve. Although the creature jumped out and scurried out the door, worshipers saw it return for the next service.
- After flames were distributed for the candlelight service, a pastor said, "Now that we're all good and lit ...," causing laughter throughout the pews. Children tend to go off-script during Christmas plays, as evidenced by all the bloopers available online. (Check out the YouTube clip titled "Sheep, Mary tussle over baby Jesus in children's pageant gone hilariously awry.")



Moments of incarnation: The wonder of the infinite-personal God is displayed, more than anywhere else, in the Incarnation. Nothing can prepare us for the birth of God: a six-pound, four-ounce Jewish boy with dark brown curly hair born in the fall

or winter of 5 B.C. in a shepherd's cave on the side of a hill in the city of Bethlehem in the Roman province of Judea in western Asia.

It is so particular it staggers the imagination. God found a parking spot, a specific place and time where his love would touch our world. [Similarly,] prayer is a moment of incarnation — God with us. God involved in the details of my life.

—Paul E. Miller, *A Praying Life*

DECEMBER 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3 - Holy Communion - Salina Fire Breakfast - First Sunday of Advent	4 - Journey Prayer Group at Evan at 10AM	5 - IHOP Fellowship Breakfast at 8:30AM	6	7	8	9
10 - Second Sunday of Advent - Grand Prairie Christmas Program at 7pm	11 - Journey Prayer Group at Evan at 10AM	12 - Evan NOW meeting at Evan at 6pm - Parish NOW meeting at 6:30pm	13 - Martha Circle	14 - Evan UWF at Herscher Restaurant at 1:30am for Christmas meeting	15	16
17 - Third Sunday of Advent - Evan Christmas Program at 10am	18 - Journey Prayer Group at Evan at 10AM	19 - Newsletter Article Deadline 9AM	20	21 - Printing the Newsletter - Sunshine Circle Christmas Party	22	23
24 - Christmas Eve Service at 4pm 31 - New Year's Eve	25 - NO Journey Merry Christmas	26 - Fold Newsletters at Evan at 8AM	27	28	29	30

"He was created of a mother whom he created. He was carried by hands that he formed. He cried in the manger in wordless infancy, he, the Word, without whom all human eloquence is mute."

—Augustine of Hippo

* * *

"It is Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air."

—W.T. Ellis

* * *

"May God give you peace with yourselves; may he give you good will towards all your friends, your enemies and your neighbors; and may he give you grace to give glory to God in the highest."

—Charles H. Spurgeon

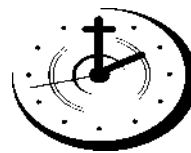
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"Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall."

—Larry Wilde



We are a Parish of
2 United Methodist churches:
Bonfield Evangelical (Evan) UMC
& Grand Prairie UMC. Our minister
is Keith Blankenship. It is our goal
to share God's love with the world
through our words and actions! We welcome you
to visit us for Sunday service that works best for
you and/or your family at the times listed.



Time For Church

Grand Prairie

At 12408 W Rt.17 Bonfield, IL
8:30 am Sunday Worship Services
9:45am Sunday School

Bonfield Evangelical

At 348 Smith St. Bonfield, IL
10:00 am Sunday Worship Service
8:30am Sunday School

Fellowship Breakfast

Come enjoy a great breakfast and fellowship
with other Parish members and community
friends at IHOP in Bourbonnais on the first

Tuesday of the month:
December 5 at 8:30am.

The group orders from the regular menu and
pays for their own meals.



If you would like to see the newsletter in color
then check out our website at
www.bonfieldgrandprairie.org and click on the
newsletter tab at the top. If you would like to
receive this newsletter by email, please send an
email to bonfieldgp@gmail.com.

Pastor Keith Blankenship's Information

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Cell: (309) 830-0875

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 11AM - 3PM
& evenings upon request

Mailing Address: 225 Country Lane
Bonfield, IL 60913



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Website - [www.
bonfieldgrandprairie.org](http://www.bonfieldgrandprairie.org)

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Email: bonfieldgp@gmail.com

Website: www.bonfieldgrandprairie.org

Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 9AM - 1:30PM

Bonfield / Grand Prairie Parish
prayerful Box 66
Bonfield, IL 60913

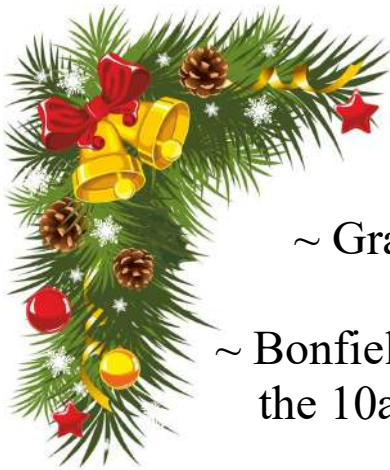
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Bonfield Box Holder

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We welcome you to join us at our
Christmas programs this year!



~ Grand Prairie: Sunday, December 10 at 7pm

~ Bonfield Evangelical: Sunday, December 17 during
the 10am service with fellowship lunch to follow

~ Christmas Eve: Sunday, December 24
at Bonfield Evangelical at 4pm

~ Advent Services: December 3, 10, 17 & 24

NOEL HALLELUJAH MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR
Peace, Hallelujah, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year