

# St. John's Lutheran Preschool Press



St. John's Lutheran Preschool

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## *The True Meaning of Christmas*

**C** is for the Christ child who was born nearly 2,000 years ago in a manger in Bethlehem

**H** is for the hope that Jesus brings to all who believe in Him and trust Him with their salvation

**R** is for resurrection of Jesus Christ who was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was both man and God, died on the cross for all of our sins, and then was raised from the dead and is now sitting at the right hand of God in heaven

**I** is for Israel who God chose to bring forth the promised saviour of the world

**S** is for the salvation that Jesus offers to all who are willing to confess their sin, believe in Him, and confess their belief in Jesus with their mouth

**T** is for the empty tomb on Easter morning

**M** is for the mercy God has shown the world by sending His only Son to suffer for our sins and bridge the gap between man and God

**A** is for our awesome God who loves us all unconditionally

**S** is for the shining light that Jesus brought to the world

### Dates to Remember:

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January Tuition Due

December 20

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Christmas Break

NO SCHOOL

December 21-January 1

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Classes Resume

January 4

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Christmas Programs

December 14 & 15

6pm

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NO SCHOOL

January 18 & 19



*Merry Christmas*

# “Christmas Family”

By Karla Erickson

Do you know what I like best about Christmas?” five-year-old Sara asked, her big brown eyes shining.

Her mother stopped wrapping gifts. “Santa?”

“I like Santa, but the most fun is wrapping presents for you and Daddy and Mike and Tim.”

Mom was pleased with Sara’s answer. Tim and Mike, her older brothers, had long lists of expensive items they wanted. Sara had no list. She was more excited about the gifts she was wrapping.

“Hi, everyone!” Dad called. “I’m home early so we can go get our tree.”

“Hurray!” Sara shouted. “Then we can decorate it.”

But later, when Mom pulled out the boxes of ornaments, both boys groaned.

“Do we have to do that tonight?” Mike asked. “I have math homework.”

“Me too,” Tim moaned.

“How about helping for just a half hour?” Dad suggested.

While her brothers argued about where decorations should go, Sara quickly and quietly placed red bulbs on the tree.

“Sara,” Tim said, “your bulbs are all at the bottom. That doesn’t look right.”

Sara’s eyes lost their sparkle.

“We need lots of bulbs on the bottom,” Dad said. “Sara’s friends aren’t as tall as you boys, and when they visit us, we want them to see lots of bulbs.” He handed Sara another bulb, and a smile lit up her face.

That night at supper, Mom said quietly, “I think we’ve all lost the spirit of Christmas—that is, all of us except Sara.”

“Oh, Mom,” Mike protested, “we all decorated the tree. And we’ve bought most of our presents.”

“I think Mom’s talking about the real meaning of Christmas,” Dad said. “And she’s right. It’s like we’re getting ready for a big party, but we’ve forgotten whom the party is for.”

Tim rolled his eyes. “We all know it’s to celebrate the Savior’s birth,” he murmured.

“But, Tim,” Dad persisted, “how was your birthday party different from the one we’re planning for Jesus Christ?”

“Well, Jesus isn’t here to get His presents.”

“What presents?” Dad asked.

“How would you have felt if all your friends brought presents for each other but no presents for you?” Mom added.

“That wouldn’t have been much of a party,” Tim admitted.

“Well,” Dad asked, “do you have a gift for the Savior on December 25th?”

“You’re trying to tell us that we need to buy gifts for Jesus?” Mike wondered.

“You don’t buy gifts for Jesus,” Tim interrupted. “You give Him gifts in other ways—like doing something good for someone.”

“Now you have the idea,” Dad said. “Do you think there’s still time to do something good for someone else?”

“It’s over a week before Christmas,” Mom put in. “Sister Altos told me about a family across town whose father is out of work and who have huge medical bills to pay. Shall I find out more about them and see if we can help them this year?”

“Won’t they be embarrassed to have us take them presents?” Mike asked. “What if the kids go to our school?”

“We could do this anonymously,” Dad said. “We could sneak our things for them onto their doorstep on Christmas Eve, and they’d never have to know who did it.”

“How can we know what they need or want?” Tim asked.

“I’ll check with Sister Altos,” Mom said. “She might be able to get sizes and ideas without letting the family know.”

Sara had been listening quietly. Now she shouted, “I hope they have a little girl! She can have some of the presents Santa was going to give me this year.”

“Does this mean that we’re giving away the presents *we’d* be getting?” Mike yelped.

“How about if everyone gets just one gift from Santa,” Dad said, “and the rest of Santa’s gifts go to our ‘Christmas family’?”

“That’s fair,” both boys agreed.

The following night, Mother had a list from Sister Altos of sizes and ages. There were two boys, a younger sister, and a six-month-old baby.

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“Remember,” Dad said, “you can still ask for one gift from Santa. Now, let’s make a list of gifts for these children.”

“I’ll start shopping tomorrow for the things we decide on,” Mom said.

“Can I go too?” Sara pleaded. “And can I help you wrap the presents?”

“Of course.” Mom looked at Tim and Mike. “It’d be fun if you’d wrap presents too. I think you’ll find it rather exciting.”

The days rushed by as everyone bought and wrapped gifts for their Christmas family. Finally Christmas Eve arrived, snowing and cold. Sara hopped up and down with excitement. Even the boys were eager to deliver the gifts.

Father drew them all around him. “I think that this is the best Christmas I’ve ever had,” he said, his voice choking with emotion. “I’m so proud of you children for giving your presents away to someone you don’t even know.”

“I just hope Santa remembers my roller blades,” Tim joked.

Everyone laughed. Dad pulled out a red envelope. “Mom, will you write a message to our Christmas family?” he asked. “We could put some money inside to help with the medical bills— what do you think?”

“I’ve saved about six dollars,” Mike volunteered. “They can have that.”

“I have about five,” Tim chimed in. He rushed to get his savings.

Sara hurried to get her piggy bank. “I have all this money!” she squealed, opening it to let a cascade of pennies, dimes, and nickels clatter to the table. “Can we wrap it in a box for the children?”

Soon every cent of her money was in a box with “Kids’ Money” written on a tag next to the bow.

Mom disappeared for a few moments. “I’ve been saving this for new curtains, but we can wait for those.” She slipped two fifty-dollar bills into the red envelope.

Dad took out his wallet. “I stopped by the bank today, thinking that they could use this.” He put a hundred-dollar bill into the envelope.

Mother placed a card with a note inside the envelope last, then sealed it.

Sister Altos had written down the address. The car resounded with Christmas songs until the correct street sign was spotted and everyone searched for the house number of their Christmas family.

“There it is!” Tim whooped. “They’re home!”

Dad drove past the house so that their car would be out of sight. “OK,” he said, “I’ll open the trunk, and we’ll load up with gifts. Be really quiet so that they don’t hear us. When all the presents are on the porch, we’ll all get back in the car except Mike. Mike, you wait until I’ve started the engine, then ring the doorbell and run.”

No one made a sound as they piled the gifts high on the front porch. Mom held up the red envelope. “I sure hope they see this,” she whispered, tucking it into the top present.

Everyone except Mike rushed to the car, Dad started the engine, and Mike rang the doorbell and raced to the car. As he jumped inside, the front door of the house opened and a little girl shouted, “Daddy! Daddy! Santa has come!”

All the way home the family chattered excitedly about how their Christmas family must be opening their gifts and how surprised they must be.

“I just hope they see the red envelope,” Mom worried aloud again.

When the family gathered for prayers that night, it was Sara’s turn. She blessed everyone in the family and their friends, adding, “Please bless our Christmas family that they’ll like our presents for them. Bless them to have a Merry Christmas.”

Early Christmas morning, the family gathered around their tree. “I got my roller blades,” Tim shouted.

Mike held up a snowboard. “Wow! This is the greatest!”

Sara discovered a doll with a white wicker bed. “Look what Santa brought me!”

They gathered into a circle and exchanged the gifts they had for each other. Mom kept wiping her eyes. Never before had she seen her children so happy.

“I hope our Christmas family is having lots of fun,” Sara said as she tucked her doll into the white bed.

Bright and early Sunday morning, the family hurried off to church. They still radiated with the glow of Christmas.

The last speaker, an elderly gentleman from another stake, was introduced.

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“May I share a short Christmas story with you?” he began. “It’s a true one. In fact, it involves someone I know in my ward across town. I am the home teacher of a young family who has suffered much these last few months. The father lost his job, and their baby has been terribly ill. Although the bishop worked with the family and ward members helped, too, it still wasn’t enough. The parents used all their savings just to keep their baby alive. I had gone to their home this past week with baked goods from my wife, hoping to help them through their holidays.

“As I talked with the father, he told me how they had gathered as a family to discuss a problem. It was tithing settlement last Sunday. They had to decide whether to pay tithing or to use their tithing money for groceries. That good father said that he told his children that they must first obey Heavenly Father. They decided to pay their tithing.

“How I worried about them! On Christmas morning, I hurried to their home. I was amazed at what I found! The children were playing with toys, and I could smell food cooking in the kitchen!

“As I entered, the children excitedly told me about their Christmas Eve. Santa had come early; he had left many presents.

“The mother then explained how they had gathered the papers and boxes after opening all their gifts on Christmas Eve. She had thrown most of the papers into the fireplace. As she crawled into bed, she worried about not having enough money to buy groceries. But she fell asleep knowing they had been given enough food for Christmas Day.

“Early the next morning, she noticed a red envelope on the floor.

“With tears in her eyes, she told me that when she opened it, there was money inside—and a note, which read: ‘Merry Christmas! You don’t know us. We don’t know you. We want you to have these gifts so you can celebrate with us the birth of our Savior.’ ”

The elderly man was so full of emotion that he could hardly finish his talk. “I guess we’ll never know who delivered those gifts on Christmas Eve, but they must be very special people who know what Christmas is all about.”

Tears trickled down Mom’s cheeks. Father clasped her shoulder tightly. Tim, Mike, and Sara scooted closer to them.

“I hope we can find another Christmas family next year,” Mike whispered.

Tim and Sara nodded vigorously.

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The Staff of St. John’s Lutheran Preschool would like to wish everyone a very blessed Christmas and Happy New Year





## December Mission

St. John's Lutheran Preschool is teaming with Asbury Mission to help children have a wonderful Christmas.

In the hallway is an "Angel Tree," with colored ornaments. Please choose one or more ornaments to purchase a Christmas present for a child. Please bring your ornament or ornaments to the office to retrieve the child's information.

All wrapped gifts must be returned to the Preschool office along with the child's information sheet. The gifts will be delivered to the children's homes on December 23rd.

**ALL WRAPPED GIFTS NEED TO BE RECEIVED IN THE PRESCHOOL OFFICE BY DECEMBER 11TH. DON'T FORGET TO ATTACH THE CHILD'S INFORMATION SHEET WITH YOUR WRAPPED GIFT.**

The Asbury Mission and the Preschool Staff thank you for your kindness in sharing the gifts of Christmas as we celebrate the birth of Jesus who is our greatest gift. Let the Lord be your guide when you determine the price range.



How would you like to sit in one of the three front rows for the Christmas Program?

Now, is your chance!

St. John's Lutheran Preschool will be holding a raffle for 3 right and 3 left front pews\*.

1 ticket = \$1  
12 tickets = \$10

All tickets must be purchased in the Preschool Office. The raffle will close at 3pm (NO EXCEPTIONS) on Friday, December 11. The 6 winners will be notified by the Preschool staff on Friday, December 11.

\*Disclaimer: Each pew must have a minimum of 8 persons. If you do not have enough friends/family to fill the pew, the Preschool reserves the right to fill the remaining empty spots due to limited seating for this event.



# Family Page



## Think About This

### Taming tantrums during the holidays

The holidays means extra shopping—and lots of time in stores with small children can mean an occasional temper tantrum. Tantrums frustrate both the child and parent, especially when they happen in public. Yet, tantrums are normal until a child has coping skills.

If your child breaks down and has a tantrum or “I want” fit in public, there are things you can do to teach your child how to regain control.

- Be consistent. Handle each tantrum with the same response.
- Stay calm. Never yell. Use a firm, but gentle voice.
- Find a quiet place away from onlookers. Hold her. Gently talk to her until she starts to gain control.
- If you have said “no,” do not give in when your child has a tantrum. Once you give in to his demands, he will connect the tantrum with getting what he wants.
- Do not try to bargain with your child while he is screaming. This implies he is in control—not you.
- Ignore onlookers. Your job is to help your child gain control. Stay focused on that task.

- adapted from *What's hoppin' n*

### Springfield Area Happenings



### December

9, 16 and 23—Old Capitol Holiday Walk. Downtown Springfield.

11-13, 17-23, 26-27—Holiday Lights at the Zoo. Henson Robinson Zoo.

12 & 13—SBC's Nutcracker Ballet. UIS Sangamon Auditorium. Admission.

13—Christmas Caroling at the Carillon. 4:30pm.

19—Fancy Nancy & Pirate Party. 10am-1pm. Harvard Park Baptist Church. \$15/child. Reservations required.

## Building Skills for Families

During the holiday season, parties and gifts are a part of the festivities. Think back to your childhood. What do you remember?

- Driving around neighborhoods to see the decorated yards
- Choosing and decorating a tree
- Eating dinners with relatives
- Watching a favorite movie together

Kids often forget the presents that they “just had to have.” This season—with less money to spend—plan activities and gatherings that are no-cost.

- adapted from *familyTime*

### Mini O'Beirne's 21st Annual Children's Holiday Store

November 28-December 23  
Fairhills Mall

Monday-Friday  
4pm-8pm  
Saturday  
10am-6pm  
Sunday  
Noon-5pm



# Your Part in the Christmas Program

Many of you have already seen one of our versions of The Christmas Story. It is a precious portrayal of the most wonderful story in the world. Seeing your child play the part of an angel, shepherd, animal, etc can be heartwarming and that is just the gift we want to give to you.

But pleasing you is not our only intention. Children learn by doing. We hope that by acting out, singing about, and watching this miraculous story, your children will internalize this most important part of their Christian education.

And we need your help. Not only do we ask that you reinforce the story at home by reading it and practicing their songs. We also ask you to prepare them to be in an attitude of worship for their performance. What they will be doing is also a gift to God. If the parents and relatives come in a worshipful mood, the children will pick up on that. So speak quietly while you are waiting; sing out when you are asked. Stay seated during the performance. Do not block the aisles or move to the front for "Kodak" moments. Be aware of the people around you. Be aware that you are in the Lord's house.

We absolutely need your cooperation with your dismissal from the sanctuary. Every year we ask the parents to stay in the sanctuary until the final hymn has been sung. Every year someone begins to leave and everyone else follows. **We do not want to lose your child!** When the halls become crowded with adults, the children are unable to follow their teachers safely back to their rooms. We need to be able to return to the pick up rooms before any of the parents leave the sanctuary. Please help us keep your children safe and secure by following this simple request.

We will again be asking you to help supply items for the reception, following the service. Every family will have an opportunity to bring something. The children look forward to this "party" and we hope you do, too. We are excited to be in the Season of Advent. It is a joyful time for all!

