



Christian
Schools
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*Advent
Reflections
Collective*

2025 Season

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Hope

A Hope Wrapped in Promise

Anna

Artwork

A Hope Wrapped in Promise

Jeremiah 33:14–16

When I was younger, I would sit with my sister and watch as the presents were slowly gathered around the tree while my mom wrapped them one by one. The first gift would show up a few weeks before Christmas, and then, day by day, the pile would grow until we could no longer see the Christmas tree stand. Every day we'd stare at the gifts with excitement and say, "I hope that one is the new (fill in the blank) I've been wanting!" Because the wrapping kept the gifts hidden, we played the game of hope almost every day until Christmas morning finally came and we could tear through the paper to see what was inside.

Jeremiah 33:14 begins with a simple but powerful phrase: "Behold, the days are coming." When Jeremiah wrote those words, Israel was in a dark place. The northern kingdom had already been taken captive by the Assyrians, and the southern kingdom of Judah was drowning in idolatry, soon to fall to Babylon. God's people were comfortable in their sin and complacent in their rebellion. Yet even in judgment, God gave them a message of hope through his prophet.

That little phrase—"Behold, the days are coming"—was a reminder that God had not forgotten his promises. Though his people were faithless, he remained faithful. Jeremiah was pointing to something greater than the pain and chaos of the moment: he was pointing to a coming Savior.

Who was this "righteous Branch" that Jeremiah spoke of (v. 15)? As Scripture unfolds, the picture becomes clearer:

Isaiah 7:14 — "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Isaiah 9:6 — "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Micah 5:2 — “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”

The hope Jeremiah spoke of was none other than Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. Some time later, that promise took on flesh and was laid in a manger. Today, we live on the other side of that promise fulfilled. Yet in our own world—crowded with busyness, pressure, and distraction—it can still feel dark and weary. Christmas can easily become about candy canes, snowmen, and finding the “right” gift instead of remembering the greatest gift ever given.

However, in the middle of all of that noise, the same hope Jeremiah proclaimed still speaks to us. God’s eternal plan of love unfolded in the person of Jesus Christ—sent on a rescue mission for our souls. He lived a perfect life in full obedience to the Father. He carried our sin to the cross, died in our place, and rose again three days later, just as he said he would. Now he sits at the right hand of God the Father, interceding for us.

What a glorious hope we have!

As you pause and reflect this Christmas season, remember that God’s promises never fail. The hope of Christ is not just a story from long ago—it’s the unshakable foundation of our lives today. May your heart be filled with joy as you rest in the truth that Christ’s redeeming work is complete, and as his follower, you will one day share eternity with him.

—Rob Behnke, K-8 principal, Ontario Christian School (CA)

Anna

Luke 2:36–38

Many years ago, there lived an old woman—a very old woman—in the city of Jerusalem. Anna was a bit bent over and withered. Her eyes didn't see as well as they once had, and she often missed parts of conversations due to loss of hearing.

Many years earlier, she had been married to a dear, godly man. But the marriage lasted a short time—only seven years, in fact. Then the love of her life died, snatched away in the prime years of love and devotion. She was left with sorrow and only memories for a full sixty years and found it hard to remember his facial features, the sound of his voice, what it was like. She was alone, bereft, forsaken by the world.

Since she had no husband or children to care for her, she lived and served at the temple. She was a prophetess, a chosen instrument of God. Often, she went without food or drink to be able to concentrate fully on communing with him. She was diligent, dependable, and faithful in her daily work.

Yet there was a longing, a yearning, and expectation not yet fulfilled. She had heard of his coming—the signs were all there. Could it be today? She often caught herself staring at the small babies—is this the promise of God, is he the Messiah? She wondered and waited with longing expectation to finally meet him.

Anna often spoke with Simeon, a devout man who frequented the temple waiting and watching for God's promised one. He said that God's Holy Spirit told him that he wouldn't die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. Imagine Anna's curiosity one day as she saw old Simeon shuffle to the temple courts to greet a young couple, a rather poor looking couple clutching a young infant. She told herself it must be an old acquaintance, a family friend he recognized. Yet she watched and saw Simeon hold the baby, cuddle him, and then lift him to heaven.

Her heart quickened within her. What was he saying? She moved toward them as quickly as her 84-year-old legs could go just to catch the end of a prophecy Simeon was giving concerning the baby:

“My eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

It was him—after all this time—he’s come! She knew he would. She began to weep uncontrollably and joined the little group. How privileged Anna felt to meet this one after so many decades—to know that he would bring salvation and life everlasting, a new covenant to reconcile mankind to God.

Times of waiting are stretching, are they not? Are you in God’s waiting room today? Waiting for an answer to prayer, for a companion, for a child, for a change in your circumstances? We can feel hopeless. We can build a wall around our hearts so we won’t be disappointed if God doesn’t come through.

For Anna, this moment of seeing Jesus was the defining one of her whole life. **Hope** fulfilled! What if she had not waited in the temple all those years to see it come to be?

Sometimes we want to rush God’s timing. We get frustrated with how slowly things are happening, or we even begin to manipulate people and circumstances to get out of that holding pattern. But God has lessons for us to learn in the waiting process. God is always faithful to lead us but sometimes allows periods of waiting to realign our priorities, to make us dependent on him and to confirm his call on our lives. God says: Wait for the Lord, be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Let’s set aside our own predetermined timetable and not panic. “I trust the Lord God to save me and I will wait for him to answer my prayer” (Micah 7:7).

Be **hope**-filled today for “he who waits on God loses no time” (Havner, Vance. Rest for the Weary).

—Mary Patterson, CSI Accreditation regional coordinator



Artwork by Ivy O. from Sheboygan Christian School (WI)

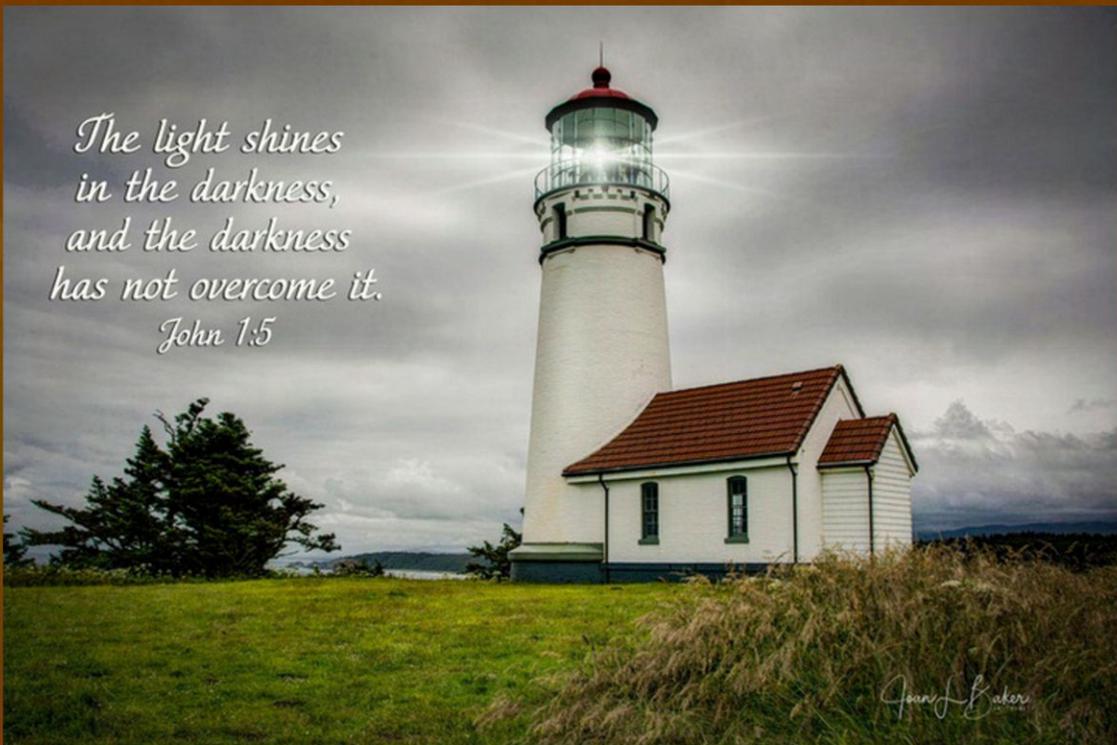
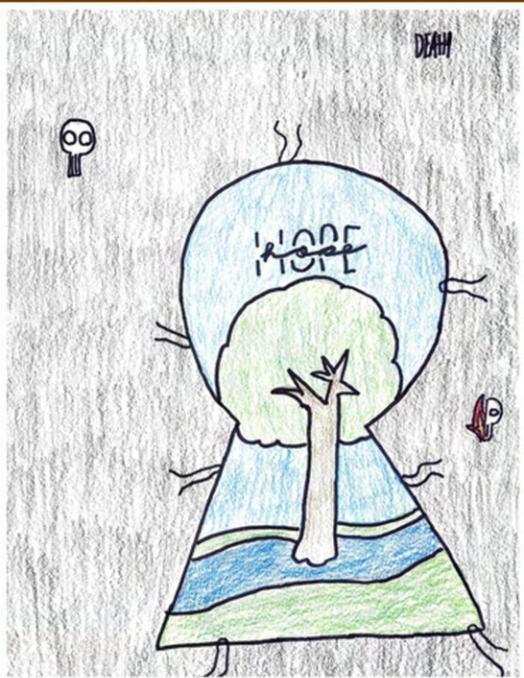
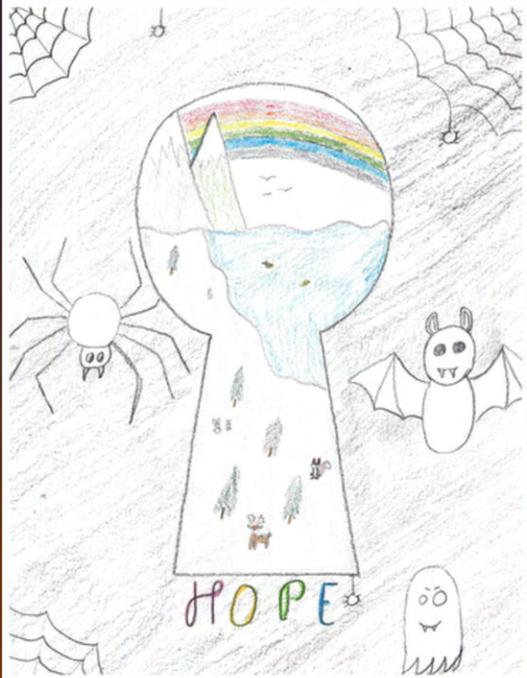
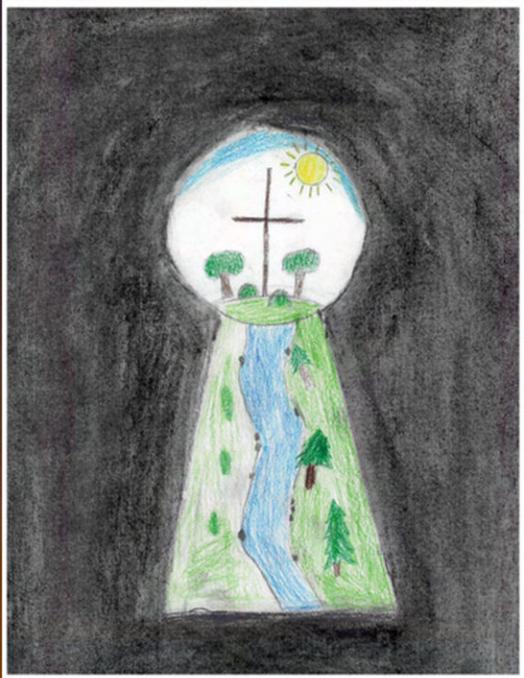


Photo by Joan Baker

Artwork by Pella Christian School (IA) 7th and 8th grade students



Peace

Finding Peace in Your Blessings

Peace

Artwork

Finding **Peace** in Your Blessings

Luke 2:14: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those whom his favor rests.”

When I was younger, I couldn't wait for Christmas to come! I loved the idea of Christmas and all the fun festive holiday activities. Most of all I couldn't wait for Christmas morning and opening all the presents. Now I realize all this excitement wasn't from really celebrating Christmas, not the true meaning. Some Christmas activities can show how Jesus was born and how we can celebrate, but others show other celebrations that aren't necessarily worshipping God. Leading up to the Christmas season, it is still hard not to center my mind around what we can get—but instead staying at **peace** and remembering all the gifts and blessings we receive from God every day. Every year around December, I now try to read the Christmas story and thank God for sending his perfect Son into this world.

My challenge for you is every day think of ten things that God put into your life that you're thankful for. Spend time in **peace** and thank God for these things. This Christmas, remember the true meaning of Christmas.

Prayer: Dear God, please help me to stay at peace with my blessings and to remember the real reason we celebrate Christmas. Amen!

Activity: Everyone thinks of something to thank God for or a prayer request. Then fold them up, put them in a jar, and hand them out. Form a big circle and go around and pray for that person's request and spend time in **peace** with each other.

-Brooklyn Kraemer, 8th grader at Sheboygan Christian School (WI)

Peace

Luke 1:68–79

Reader 1:

We are living in times that are not unique to us alone. Times of anxiety and worry. Times of trouble and momentous change. Times of many problems with few solutions. This was certainly the atmosphere and environment in which Jesus was born. Israel was in trouble. They had been for a long time. Many foreign rulers had shown their strength against Israel. Rome was just another in a long line of misery makers.

Reader 2:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
For he has visited and [claimed back] his people
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of his servant David.

Reader 3:

He spoke [this event] by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old
That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all who hate us

Reader 4:

To show the mercy promised to our fathers
And to remember his holy covenant,
The oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us
That we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,

Reader 3:

Might serve him without fear

Reader 2:

In holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

Reader 1:

The enemies Zechariah, the one speaking this word, hoped to be delivered from were visible. Roman soldiers marching everywhere. Roman tax collectors squeezing every coin and grain seed out of the last peasant. But the real rescue comes in that very next line: that we might serve him without fear.

We are called to **peace**, not fear.

We are called to **peace**, not anxiety and worry.

We are called to **peace**, not trouble and problems.

Yet, our fight is not against flesh and blood but in a world unseen and unheard.

Our battleground is holiness, and our weapon is right behavior in the eyes of our God.

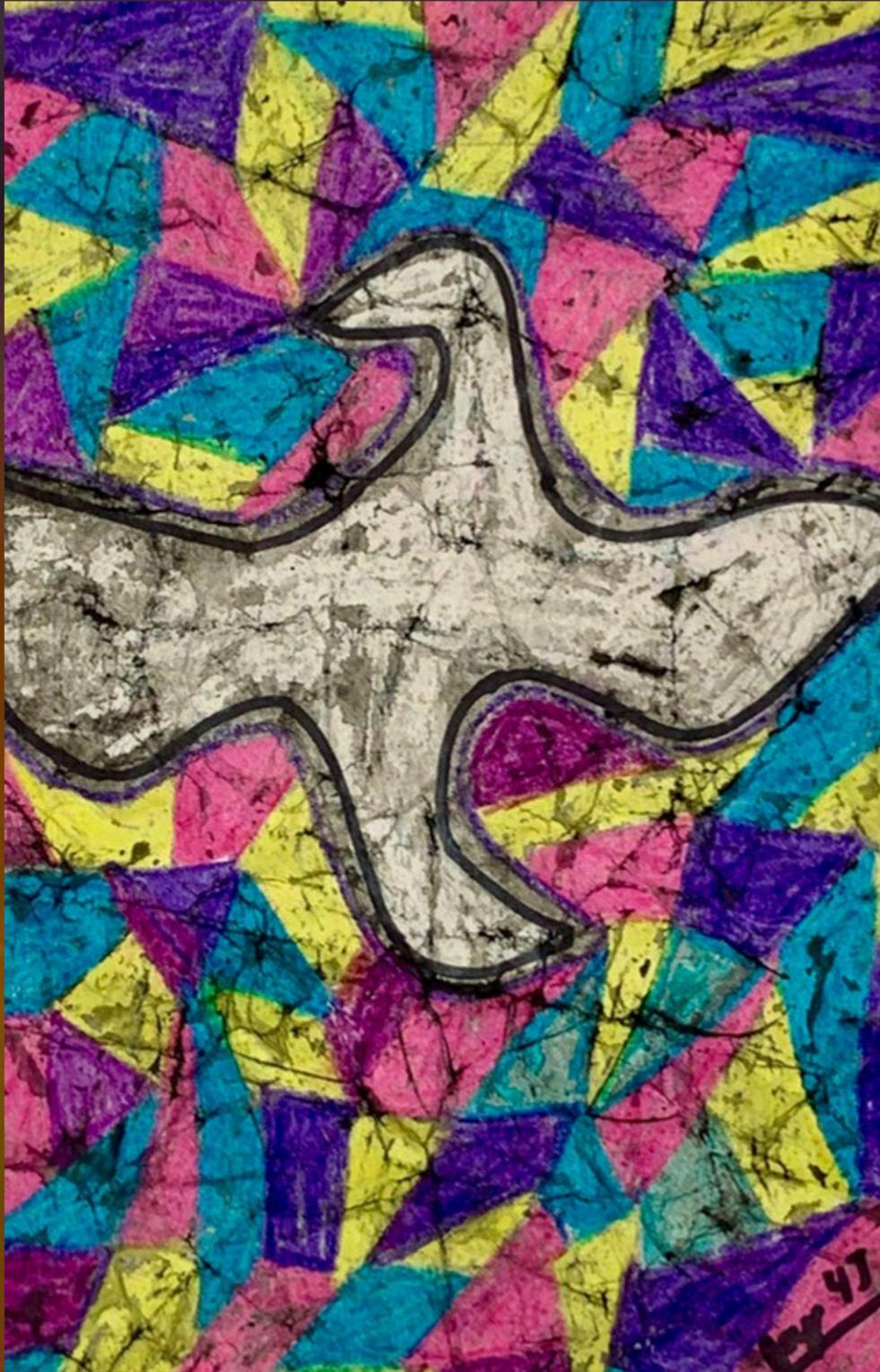
Reader 1:

The way we dress ourselves for this battle is not common, not ordinary. It is holy armor. Armor of light. It begins in the Word of God, which proclaims that he alone has saved us. And so we stand firm, dressed in his righteousness, fastened with his truth, and ready to go at a moment's notice with the gospel of **peace** on our lips.

Meditation:

May we watch out for those who cause divisions or set up obstacles to our faith, that which is contrary to what we were taught. Rather, may we be wise in what is good, building others up. The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

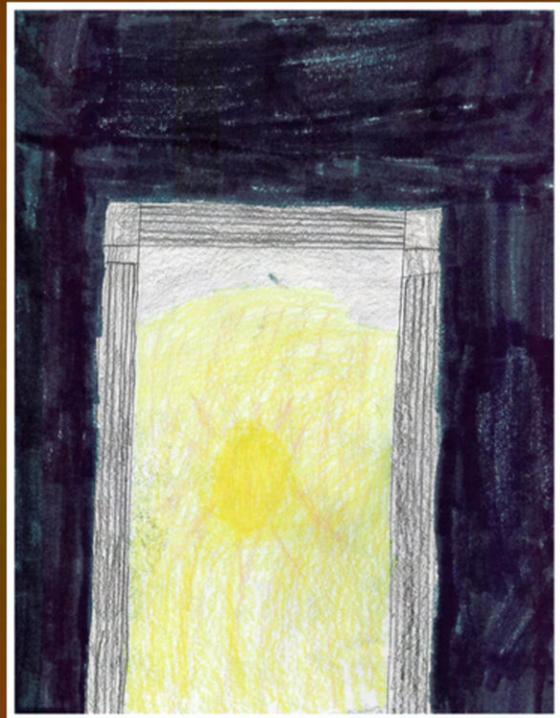
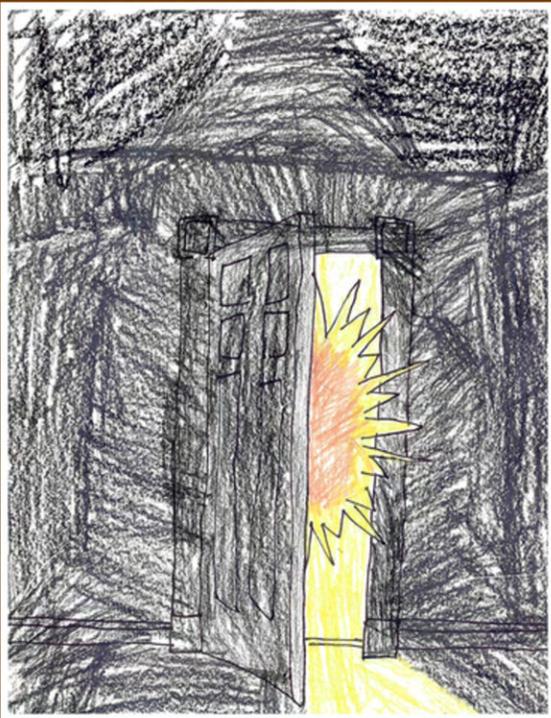
-This liturgy will be used at Lansing Christian School (MI) in the secondary Advent chapel series.



Artwork by Jay G., Sheboygan Christian School (WI)



Artwork by Diana S., Sheboygan Christian School (WI)



Artwork by Pella Christian School (IA) 7th and 8th grade students

Artwork by Pella Christian School (IA)
7th and 8th grade students



Joy

How Are You Feeling?

Joy

Artwork

How Are You Feeling?

Luke 1:68–79

How are you feeling about Christmas these days? Did last week's parade get you in the spirit? Do you need snow for it to seem like Christmas time? Have you started to do your gift shopping, or are you one of "those people" who were done long ago?

It is funny, or interesting, how different things trigger our mind to be "in the Christmas spirit." Some family traditions, movies, or smells can all be triggers to set our mind on Christmas—and those are beautiful things! However, Christ came to earth on a mission to save us from our sins. God created us on purpose and for a purpose (Eph. 2:10), and he loves us—so he did not decide to scrap the human race when we couldn't obey one single very clear and very important health and safety command that totally messed everything in the universe up (everything); instead God went to extreme measures to redeem and restore a relationship with his children.

Read the scriptures (the gospel of Luke is a good place to start) and dwell on the beauty of Christmas; even if you haven't seen your favorite Christmas show or cut down a live tree yet with the smell of fresh pine, and even if there is no snow—it is time to be in the Christmas spirit. Because Christmas Day came, and we have every **joyful** reason to reflect on the beauty of our God's love. Christ came to earth on purpose and for a purpose. Let's spread that beautiful message.

Shalom.

–Patrick McNamara, Lamont Christian School (MI)

Joy

Psalm 59:1-2

“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.”

There was a time in my life when I felt sad, and I wasn't feeling myself because my relationship with God was not at its strongest. In my hard time, I didn't know what to do, and I was having a hard time being joyful. I tried praying about it and reading the Bible. I read about when Jesus was born and when he lived on earth and showed the perfect example of how to live your life. This helped me find joy because he didn't have to live on earth at all, but he wanted to show us what it looked like to live the perfect life on earth. Another way I found joy was when I remembered that Jesus is coming back again even though we are all sinners and don't deserve it. He lived that perfect life so he could die for our sins and defeat death. Jesus cares for us and that is why I can always find joy no matter what I am going through.

You can find **joy** in any of your hard times because Jesus is there for us and will always want the best for us. That is why we know that we can always trust him in whatever we do. We can also look back to the Christmas story and remember that Jesus came to this world to show us how to live our life and die for our sins. Another way we can find **joy** in our hard times is focusing on the truth that Jesus will come back and that we can prepare for his second coming, because that is what Advent is all about.

I challenge you to try to be **joyful** this week and try to not complain because God has been so good to us and will come back again. This news should bring everyone **joy** and fill us with eagerness for Jesus to come back. If you are having any trouble with finding **joy** in your life and in your hard times, you can bring it to God along with any of your other problems.

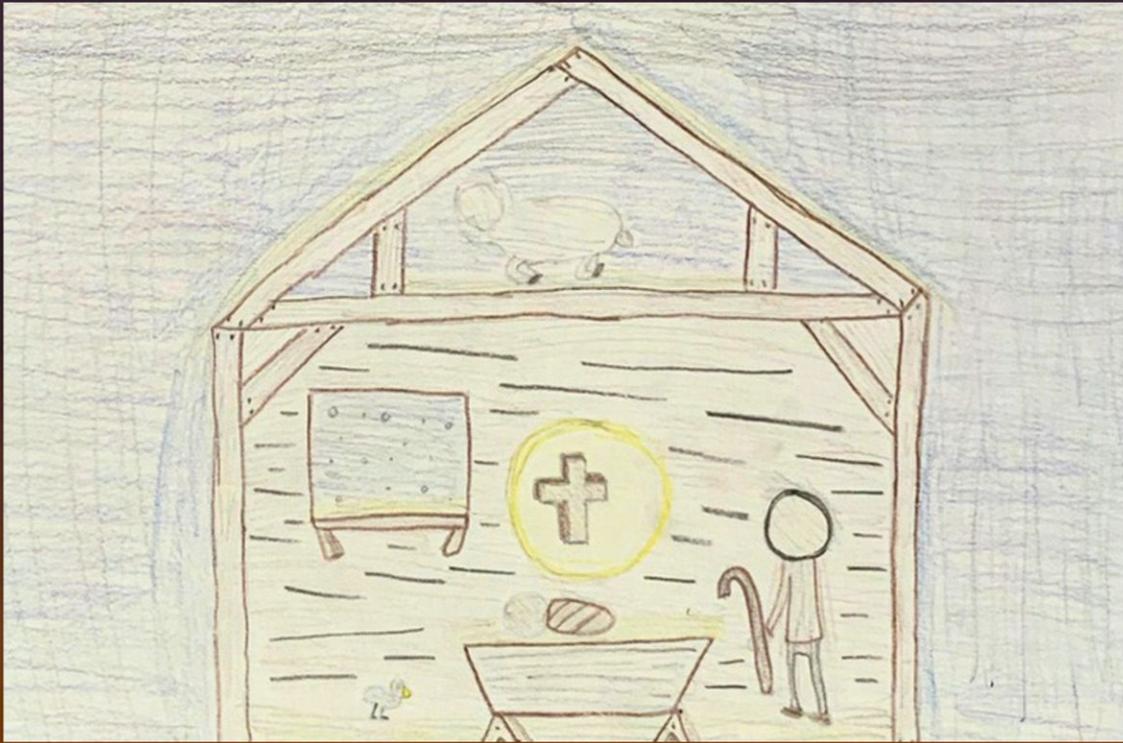
Prayer: “Dear God, please help me to find joy even when I am struggling with hard times. Please help me to know that you are the only way to true joy and you will always guide us in the right direction. Amen”

Activity: Let’s practice having joy by singing/listening to Christmas songs like “Joy to the World” to prepare for Jesus’ second coming.

-Chase Moeller, 8th grader at Sheboygan Christian School (WI)



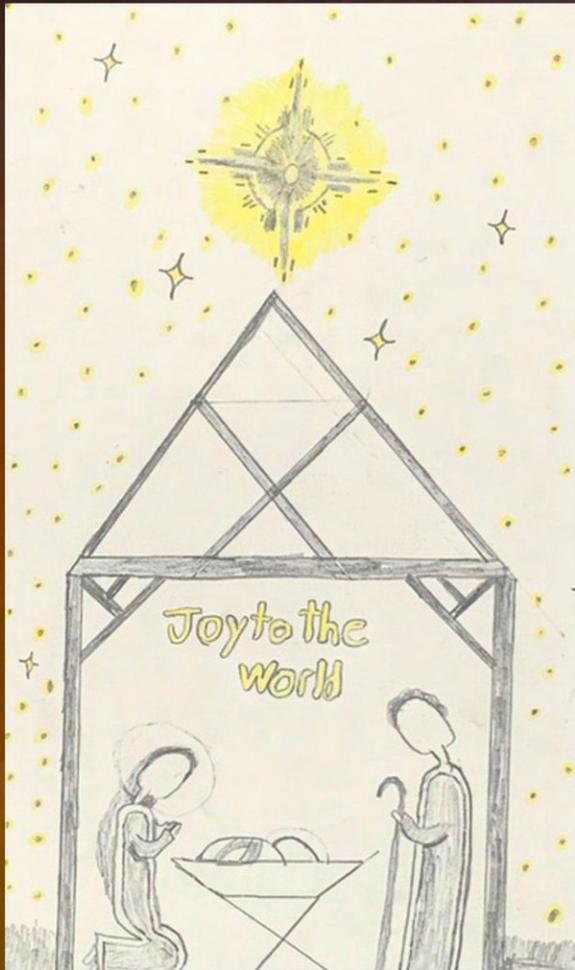
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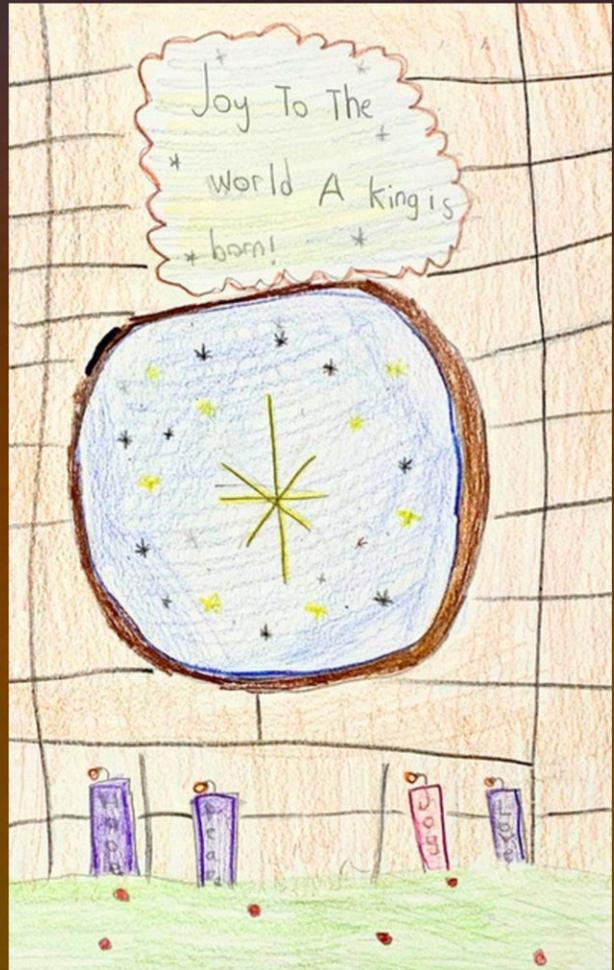
Artwork by Levi B., Sheboygan Christian School (WI)



Artwork by Gwen J., Sheboygan Christian School (WI)



Artwork by James O.,
Sheboygan Christian School (WI)



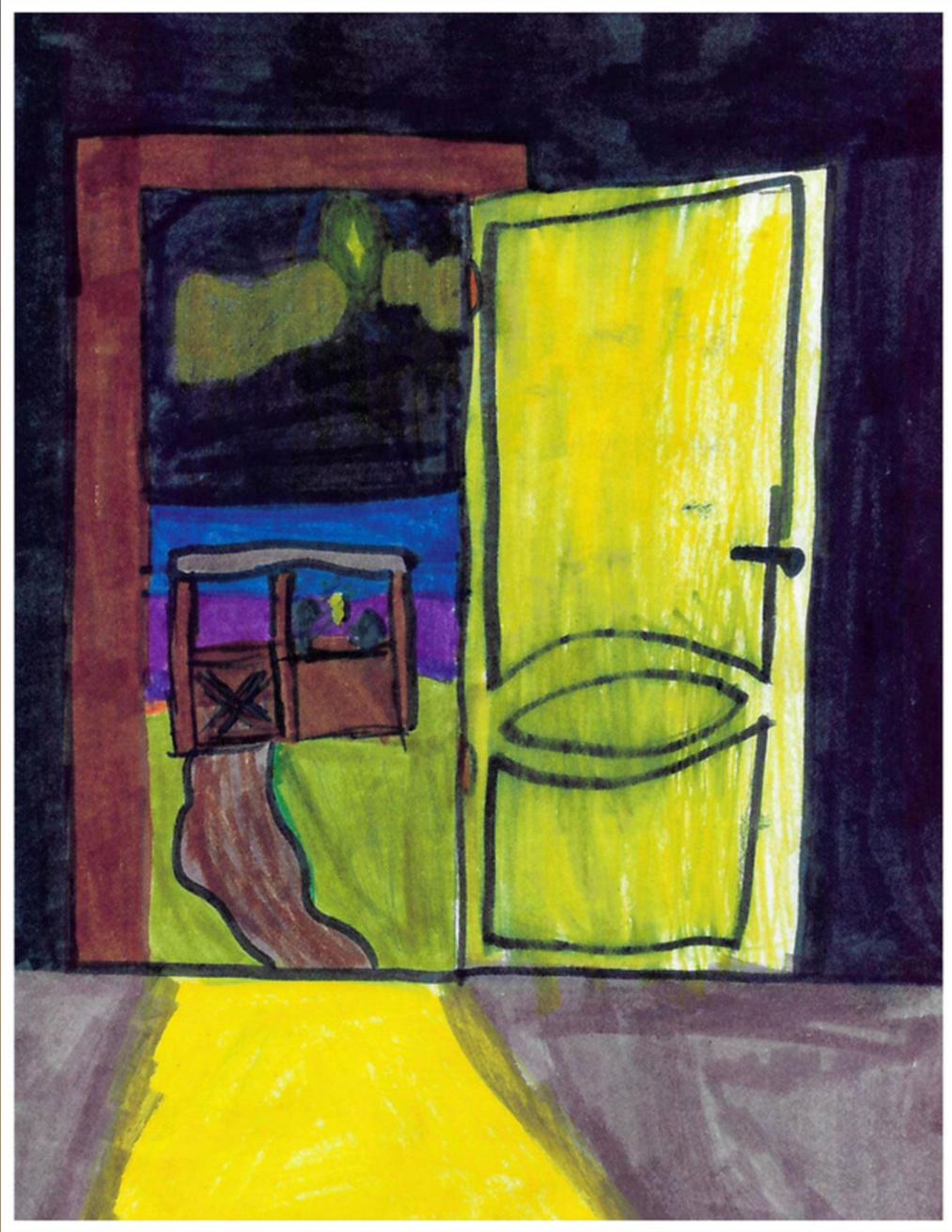
Artwork by Finnley F.,
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Artwork by Maely R., Sheboygan Christian School (WI)



Artwork by Pella Christian School (IA) 7th and 8th grade students



Artwork by Pella Christian School (IA) 7th and 8th grade students

Love

The Lost Sheep

Loving One Another
this Christmas Season

Artwork

The Lost Sheep

2 Corinthians 13:14

“May the grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

Once upon a time, there was a shepherd. The shepherd had a flock of 100 sheep! Every day, he counted them to make sure that none were missing. But one day, one of his sheep ran away from the flock—VERY far away. So far, the sheep couldn't see his home anymore. Then the shepherd started counting his flock: “97, 98, 99 . . . 99?!?” He realized that one sheep was missing. So, he left the flock and searched far and wide for the missing sheep. As soon as the shepherd found the missing sheep, he carried it home, joyful that he found his sheep.

In this story, God shows us how much he **loves** us. During Advent, we learn about this **love**. Just like how the shepherd finds his lost sheep in the story, God will go to the ends of the earth to bring us back to him when we go astray. God's **love** is all around us, every day. During Christmas, we can feel and know this **love** by remembering that God gave his Son to us so that we can be with him.

Prayer: Dear God, please help me to stay on the right path and do what you have planned for me. Please help me when I go astray and please help others to see your glory. Amen.

Activity: Everlasting Love. Instructions: Cut the word “LOVE” out of paper. Then take the letters and glue or tape string onto them, connecting them. Decorate it with prayers or pictures of things you love. Hang it up in a place you can see it to remind you that God loves you.

—Curtis Ritt, 8th grader at Sheboygan Christian School (WI)

Loving One Another this Christmas Season

Dear Friends,

I love the sound of a child's laughter. More specifically, I love the sound of my grandchildren's laughter. I experienced that joy this summer after an almost four-year break when I hosted all my children and their children, who live all over the world, for five days of pure joy and sweet laughter together. Close your eyes and think of that sound, and I imagine that we all experience a smile. There is such joy that sound brings to our hearts. As school leaders, I hope that in between meetings and decisions, you are taking in the joy on your school campus.

Why do I bring that up now? Well, as I've begun thinking about Christmas, I've been thinking about Mary's joy and Jesus's laughter. The very personal joy that Mary and Joseph experienced just doesn't compare to the corporate joy that we as believers in Christ know today. But I challenge you to answer the question, "Is my joy obvious and does my joy reflect all that Christ has done for me?"

One of the clearest statements in all the Bible is 1 Timothy 1:15 where it says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The reason we celebrate Christmas is encapsulated in that very short yet very powerful verse. Wouldn't it be great if this year, we all see Christ in his glory and fullness, seeing with a love far beyond our own human capacities?

God's love and generosity in the gift of Jesus at Christmas is the same spirit of love and generosity that we are obligated to show. As Christians, especially as Christian leaders, the generosity of our service, of our time (with boundaries, of course) and in our relationships must model the biblical framework that God has given us. Knowing how we know ourselves, and living in the twenty-first century as we do, it is solely through our recognition as sinners and with God's strength that we can do this.

Let's bless each other and everyone within our spheres of influence by doing these few thoughtful things. Listen to the laughter. Think of the joy we have in Christ. Live out love and generosity. And by this, "everyone will know that you are (my) disciples, if you love one another." John 13:35.

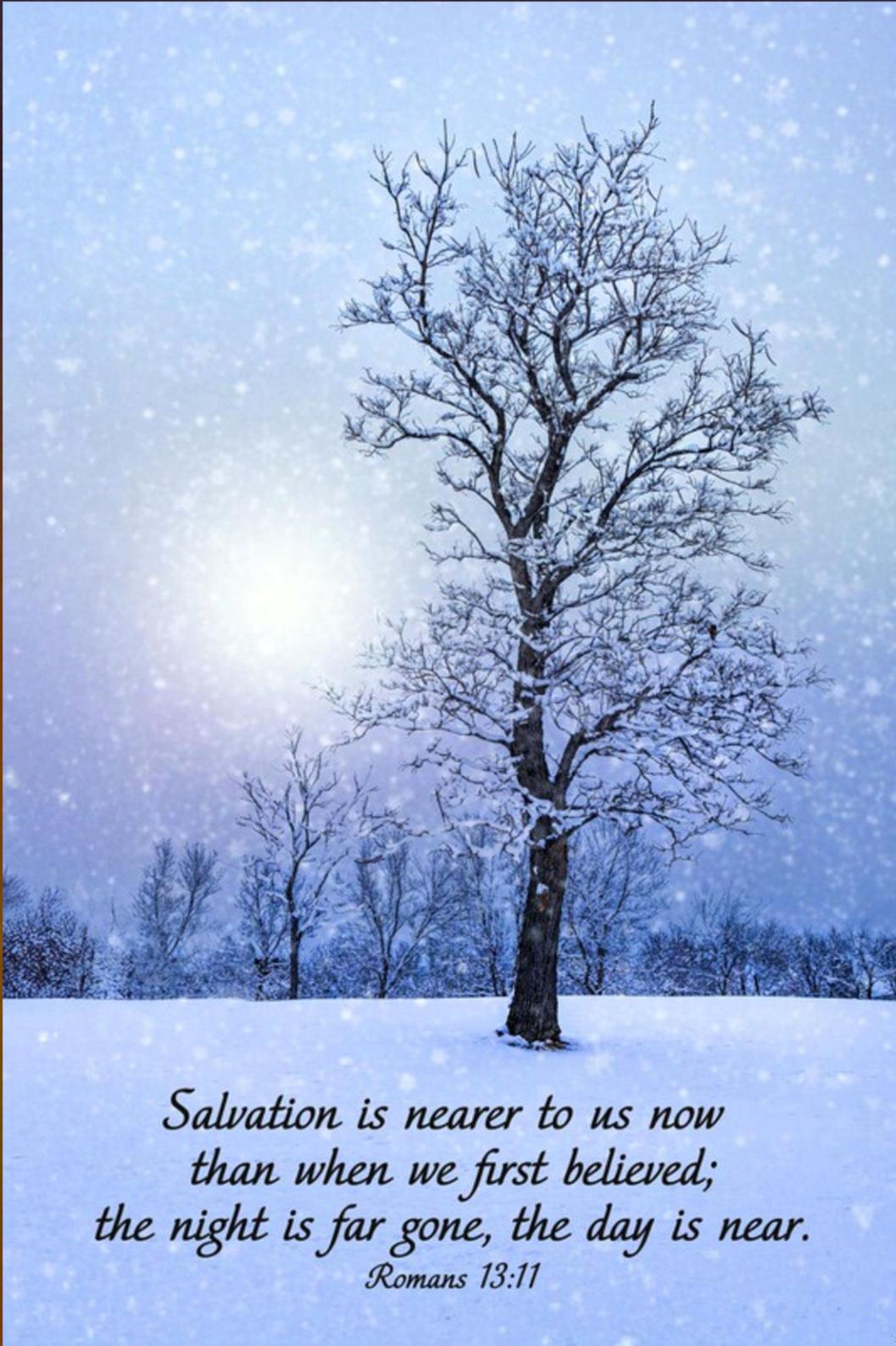
Merry Christmas! Let's live in joyful expectation of all God will do as we serve him deeply. And when you sing the words of the 1907 hymn, Joyful, Joyful we adore thee, be sure you are doing just that.

Joy to the World through our Savior, Jesus Christ,

-Jenn Thompson, CSI chief executive officer



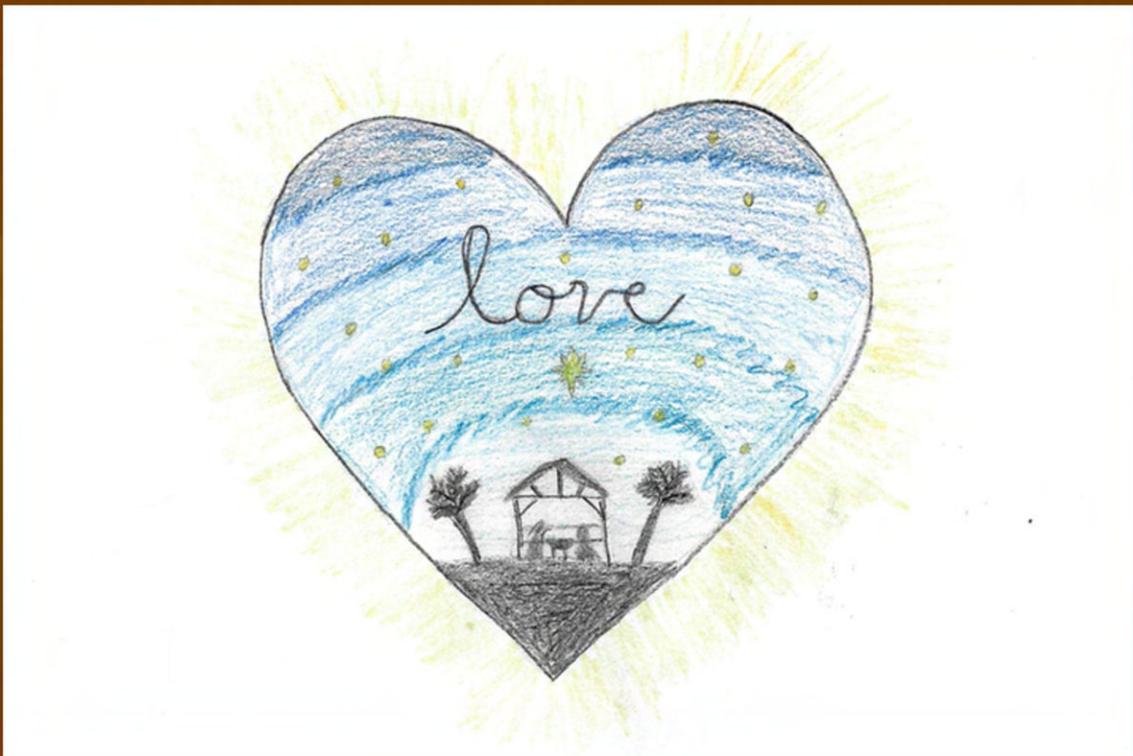
Artwork by Jacob M., Sheboygan Christian School (WI)



*Salvation is nearer to us now
than when we first believed;
the night is far gone, the day is near.
Romans 13:11*

Photo by Joan Baker

Artwork by Pella Christian School (IA) 7th and 8th grade students



We encourage your school community to consider contributing to next year's CSI Advent Reflections Collective. You may send your submission by scanning the QR code below:

