



2024

Christmas
Greetings



The
News - Banner
Bluffton, Indiana

Oh Holy Night

*The Stars are Brightly
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Dear Savior's Birth.*



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Get creative with holiday decor

The end of the year is upon us and that often involves decorating a home in its holiday finest. According to Today's Homeowner, nearly 70 percent of Americans plan to display outdoor holiday decorations. Among those choosing to decorate, 34 percent will do so before Thanksgiving.

Everyone has a different vision of a well-appointed holiday home, but there's always room to make things more unique and creative. These ideas can add a little extra to holiday displays.

Decorate other rooms

Who says holiday decorating is exclusive to living and dining areas? Think about decorating unexpected places, like swapping out everyday towels and shower curtains with something festive.

Swags of greenery wrapped in lights can be added to bed frames.

Coordinate the ornaments

Identify a color theme and then showcase it with ornaments. Think about matching the ornaments to the presents wrapped under the tree as well. Purchase white package paper and color or paint the paper to be the same hues as the ornaments on the tree boughs.

It's hip to be square

While round wreaths are traditional, make your own wreaths in a different geometric shape by using wire or another material as the frame. Square wreaths may be unexpected, and you also can turn the square on its side for a diamond shape.

Add a spot of color

Certain holidays are

known for their particular color palettes, such as red and green for Christmas. But you also can do something unexpected. Whether using a lighter shade of the same color family or adding an accent color like purple or blue, you can change things up in a creative way.

Make an unexpected bouquet

Swap flowers for pine cones, berries and greenery in unique vessels. For example, arrange your centerpiece in a tall fountain glass or even a cocktail shaker.

Try a different accent tree

Use a styrofoam cone as the base of a tree for a centerpiece or sideboard. Attach poinsettia branches for a vibrant red tree, or stacked lemons or oranges filled with greenery for a fresh-smelling

citrus creation.

Suspend belief

Instead of attaching a tree topper to the tallest bough, hang one from the ceiling just above the tree to add even more whimsy.

Mix and match

When it comes to a holiday table, mix and match table settings for an eclectic tableau.

Shift into neutral

Instead of a large holiday display in familiar colors, rely on neutral, wintry tones that will blend in with the home but add a festive touch. Natural wood, whites and creams, and muted greens can fill spaces.

Unique holiday decorations and schemes can be a great way to add new life to a home this December.

With you in mind at Christmas Time!

As we join you and your family in celebrating the birth of our Savior, we recall the many generous folks we've had the privilege to serve this year, and know that we are truly blessed.



*Wishing you glad tidings and a holiday
that is as special as you are. Thanks!*

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*For unto us
a child is born,
UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN
Isaiah 9:6*

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from*

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Notable Christmas celebrations around the world

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas all over the world. Christmas celebrations include various time-honored traditions that celebrants hold near and dear to their hearts. Depending on where someone lives, their Christmas traditions may look quite different from those in other parts of the globe.

It can enjoyable to learn how Christmas is celebrated elsewhere and perhaps even incorporate a few new traditions into your celebrations. Take a peek at these customs near and far.

- **Seafood and beachside celebrations:** Australia is located in the southern hemisphere, which means Aussies are enjoying the peak of their summer come December 25. A white Christmas is unlikely, unless the "white" refers to white, sandy beaches. Santa is probably swapping his thick coat for a pair of board shorts, and heavy, roast-laden meals are unlikely to make it on to the menu. Instead, Australians dine on seafood feasts and spend Christmas outdoors camping or at the beach.

- **Krampus parade:** Some Christmas elves are not so jolly. Just ask residents of the Austrian, German and Hungarian Alps. Each year in this region, a true "Bad Santa" is the talk of town. Villagers believed that Krampus, a half-man, half-goat creature with a legion of ill-tempered elves, roamed the mountains wreaking havoc. Krampus was said to abduct miscreants and set unruly youth or even intoxicated adults straight. Today, Krampus is more the "bad cop" to Santa's "good cop" persona. Krampus is celebrated as an antihero at parades and other events.

- **Las Posadas:** According to scripture, Joseph and Mary

had to make an arduous journey from their hometown to Bethlehem for census purposes while Mary was pregnant. When the couple arrived, they found lodgings were nonexistent, and Mary ended up giving birth to Jesus in a manger surrounded by animals. In celebration of that journey, people in Mexico and Guatemala celebrate Las Posadas, a procession representing Mary and Joseph's journey and their struggle to find lodging.

- **La Befana:** In Italian folklore, La Befana is a witch-like old woman who, like Santa, delivers gifts to children throughout Italy. Instead of this gift-giving taking place on Christmas, La Befana hands out gifts on the Epiphany Eve in a similar way to how the Three Magi brought presents to Baby Jesus. Le Befana also is believed to fly through the night sky to sweep away all the troubles of the old year and clear the way for a fresh start.

- **Move over reindeer:** Although reindeer often garner fanfare this time of year, the Yule goat is a Christmas symbol and tradition in Scandinavia and northern Europe. Each year in towns throughout Sweden and other areas, large statues of Yule goats are built on the first day of Advent and stand throughout the holiday season. This tradition dates back to ancient Pagan festivals, and some believe the goat is connected to the Norse god Thor, who rode in the sky in a chariot pulled by two goats.

Holiday traditions differ considerably in various regions of the world. Celebrants may want to consider incorporating foreign traditions into their own Christmas celebrations this year.

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These colorful cookies are tailor-made

Baking during the holiday season is a tradition in many households across the globe. Family baking sessions provide a perfect holiday season bonding activity, and the payoff is both cherished family time and delicious, indulgent foods once the items are ready to eat.

Holiday hosts know they'll need to feed their guests over the course of their stay, and that includes snacks. This holiday season, hosts can involve their guests in family baking sessions and whip up a batch of these delicious and colorful "Christmas Biscuits" from Lines+Angles.

Christmas Biscuits

Makes approximately 24 cookies

For the dough:

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted, plus extra for dusting

1 1/3 cups confectioner's sugar, plus extra for dusting

3/4 cup almond meal

1 cup unsalted butter, cold and cubed

1 large egg yolk

1 tablespoon cold water

1/2 teaspoon fine salt

For the icing and decoration:

4 cups confectioner's sugar

3 tablespoons meringue powder

7 tablespoons warm water, combined



with 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, assorted food color (e. g., red, pink and turquoise), assorted colored sugar crystals (e. g., red, pink and white)

1. For the dough: Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease and line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

2. Combine flour, confectioner's sugar and almond meal in a large mixing bowl. Stir well to mix.

3. Add butter, egg yolk, water, and salt, and mix well with an electric mixer with spiral attachments until mixture starts to come together as a dough.

4. Turn out onto a floured surface and knead briefly until even. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 30 minutes.

5. After chilling, roll out dough on a lightly floured surface to approximately 0.25" thickness.

6. Use assorted star-shaped cookie cutters to cut out approximately 23 variably sized star shapes. Arrange between prepared sheets, spaced apart.

7. From remaining dough, cut out one teardrop and two semi-circles of

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for family baking sessions

dough, using appropriate cutters or working freehand with a paring knife. Arrange on one of the baking sheets.

8. Bake cookies for 12 to 15 minutes, until golden and dry to the touch. Remove to cooling racks to cool.

9. For the icing and decoration: Thoroughly stir together confectioner's sugar and meringue powder in a large mixing bowl.

10. Gradually beat in warm water and vanilla extract mixture using an electric mixer until icing is smooth and of a flooding consistency; you may not need all of the water.

11. Divide icing between three bowls. Color two bowls pink and red, respectively, by beating in enough pink and red coloring to achieve uniform colors. Leave the third bowl uncolored.

12. Spoon pink and red icing into separate piping bags fitted with small, round-tip nozzles.

13. To ice the cookies, pipe around their perimeters with the icings to create borders. Fill in middle of cookies with more icing; you can use a damp,

warm offset palette knife to spread out icing to an even finish.

14. Carefully transfer iced cookies to cooling racks, decorating with the sugar crystals in festive patterns.

15. Using same technique as in steps 13 and 14, ice teardrop cookie with red and white icing for Santa's hat and beard, respectively. Ice the two semi-circle cookies with white icing.

16. Before icings have set, carefully attach semi-circle cookies to teardrop cookie to fashion Santa's mustache. Color any remaining white icing with turquoise coloring and then dab onto teardrop cookie for Santa's eyes. Pipe some pink icing below eyes for his nose.

17. Let cookies set and harden before serving.

Tip: Flooding consistency should be similar to the consistency of toothpaste. If your icing is too thick, thin it out with some warm water, mixing it into the icing in drops

Preparation time: 1 hour, 20 minutes

Cooling time: 30 minutes

As 2024 concludes, The Wells County Foundation, Inc. would like to thank those who have been instrumental in furthering its mission of improving the quality of life in Wells County.



To our donors: If not for faithful supporters like you, we wouldn't exist. So thank you for supplying the funds which allow us to make a difference in the quality of life for Wells County residents.

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Rejoice! For unto you is born this day in the
city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:11



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We're all aglow with happiness and filled with gratitude too, as we celebrate the holidays with ones we cherish, like you!

We'd like to thank all of our kind friends and neighbors in this community for making us feel at home here. May your holiday be merry, bright and filled with the blessings of friendship, family, peace, health, happiness and love.



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How to keep guests entertained this holiday season

Gatherings with loved ones are a big part of what makes the holiday season such a special time of year. As families grow and spread out across the map, they may not get too many chances to spend quality time with one another. But the holiday season is a time each year when families make a concerted effort to get together.

As families get together under the same roof during the holiday season, individuals tasked with hosting gatherings tend to have a lot on their plates. Memories tend to be made around the holiday dinner table, but the season also presents ample opportunities to create nights to remember outside the house as well. Hosts can keep the following ideas in mind as they look for ways to entertain guests this holiday season.

- Take a turn as a tour guide. Locals may not make the rounds of nearby tourist destinations too frequently, but the holiday season is a great opportunity for hosts to show guests what makes their towns so unique. Serve as a tour guide for guests on a sightseeing day with visits to local monuments or museums. Wrap the day up



at a holiday bazaar where local small business owners have set up shop. This affords guests a chance to tour a new community or a hometown they haven't visited in awhile, and also makes for a great chance for all to squeeze in a little last-minute holiday shopping.

- Plan an ugly sweater bar crawl. If hosts and their guests are all of age, an ugly sweater bar crawl can make for a fun night out on the town. Encourage guests to wear an ugly holiday sweater and map out a route and schedule of visits to local bars and restaurants. Hosts must prioritize safety on these types of excursions, so arrange for a bus to take guests from one spot to the next if establishments are far away from one another. If Main Street has

a local bar district, arrange for transportation downtown at the start of the crawl and home when the night ends.

- Take in some local entertainment. Whether it's a holiday lighting display show or a local theater performance of a classic holiday tale like Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol," a night of local live entertainment is a great way for hosts and their guests to get out of the house. Hosts can even book a reservation for a pre-show meal at a local restaurant so they can be free of cooking and give guests their undivided attention.

- Host a holiday movie night. Weary travelers who want to stay in may appreciate a holiday movie double feature. Hosts can let guests pick a pair of holiday films and then host a double feature, complete with traditional movie fare like popcorn and candy. Hosts can even offer adult guests a glass of homemade eggnog during the films to up the holiday ante even further.

Holiday hosts can embrace various ways to entertain guests during a time of year when there's no shortage of fun ways to spend a night.



But the angel said to them,

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

Luke 2:10-11

May this glorious season fill your heart with hope, renew your faith and comfort your spirit. We greatly appreciate everything you have done to make our year special. **From our family to yours, best wishes for a blessed and merry Christmas.**



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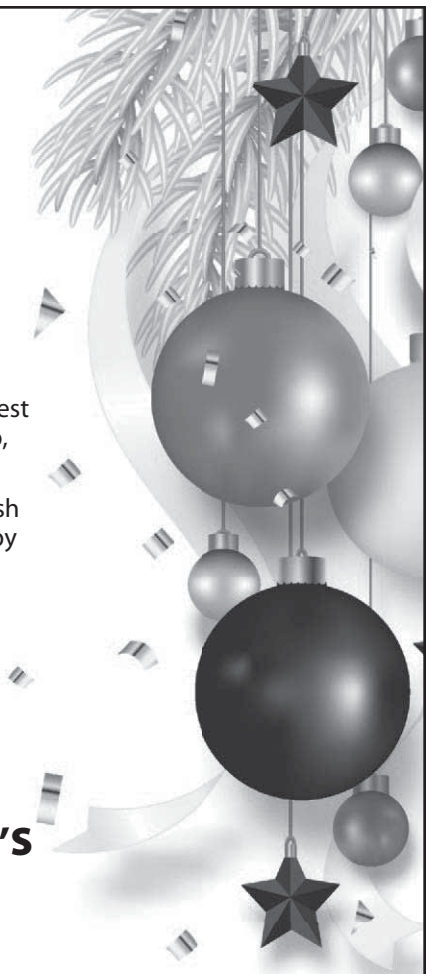
Here's hoping your season is gifted with all the best blessings, including health, happiness, friendship, love, peace and prosperity.

Thanks for being a bright spot in our year. We wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous 2022.



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Celebrating the Epiphany

The holiday season is full of faith and celebration. Even though people may believe this important time begins at the start of December, for millions of the Christians, the Twelve Days of Christmas begin with the birth of Baby Jesus on December 25 and continue through the Epiphany on January 6.

The Epiphany, also known as Three Kings Day, is a Christian feast day that “celebrates the revelation of God in His Son as human in Jesus Christ,” says The National Shrine of Saint Jude. The Epiphany is celebrated on January 6 each year and gets its name from the Greek word meaning “to reveal, or manifestation,” a nod to the idea that this was the day Jesus was revealed to the world.

On the Epiphany, three Magi visited the Christ child to pay homage. These wise men were the first to greet Jesus after his parents. The Magi followed a star to Bethlehem, having faith that the Child’s location would be accurate. The unlikely royal visitors bestowed gifts

of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These herbs are typically used in burial ceremonies, and their offering may have potentially foreshadowed Jesus’ destiny.

According to Father Hezekias Carnazzo, a Melkite Catholic priest and founding executive director of the Virginia-based Institute of Catholic Culture,



the Feast of the Epiphany is one of the earliest feasts and actually predates the celebration of Christmas.

Although the Epiphany is an important date for Christians and many celebrate it, celebrants in Spain and Latin America consider it as important as Christmas Day. Within these nations

Día de los Reyes (Three Kings Day) is a time for serving Rosca de Reyes, an oval-shaped treat that has a small doll inside to represent Baby Jesus. The figurine symbolizes the hiding of the infant Jesus from King Herod’s troops. Children also receive the majority of their gifts on Three Kings Day. It is customary for kids to place their old shoes with a wish list on them for the Three Kings. On the morning of January 6, the shoes are filled with toys and gifts.

The Epiphany is celebrated in various ways around the world. In the Czech Republic, people swim in the freezing cold Vltava River and men dress up as the Magi before riding camels through Prague’s city center. Three Kings Bread, similar to the Rosca de Reyes and called Dreikönigskuchen, is prepared and consumed in Germany and Switzerland.

Christmas fanfare does not cease when the calendar turns from December 25 to 26. The Epiphany on January 6 also is an important day of celebration.

Glory to the Newborn King



As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, we give thanks for every blessing he has bestowed upon us this year, including the kind support of this community.

Many Thanks & Merry Christmas!

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A festive guide to caroling

Christmas caroling is a joyful tradition that has endured for centuries. Christmas caroling can be traced to the fourth century in Rome. Latin hymns were written to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Historians believe that even before the emergence of Christianity midwinter songs existed to lift people's spirits through the bleak weather and extended hours of darkness.

Christmas caroling continues to unite communities and spread holiday cheer through song. It is time to inspire a resurgence of caroling by planning to gather friends, family, or neighbors for a caroling session. This guide can help anyone plan a memorable caroling event.

Gather your group

Begin by assembling a group of singers. No one needs to be an expert singer, as enthusiasm goes a long way. Reach out to friends, family, coworkers, and/or local community members. Try to get a diverse group of people together whose main goal is to have fun.

Find the right time and date

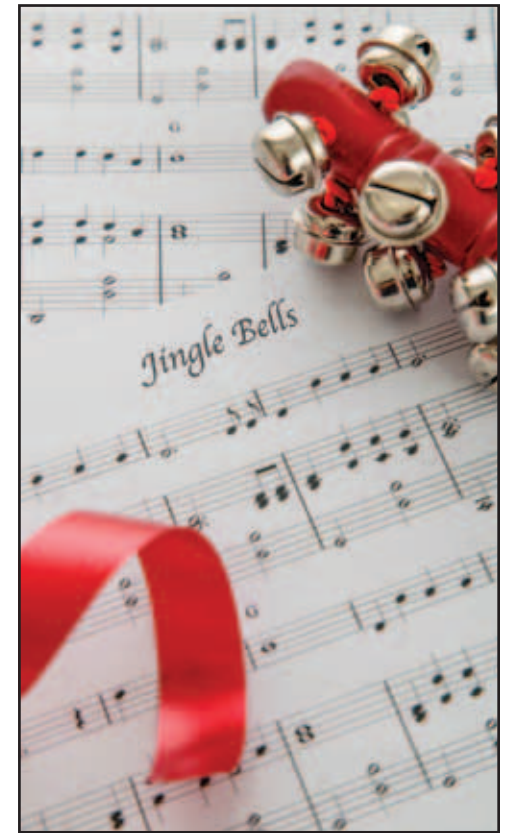
Typically evening hours after work or during weekends are when you can reach the greatest number of people. The goal is to enable participants to relax and enjoy the experience.

Map out a caroling route

Carefully identify neighborhoods or locations that are known for being festive. While the organizer may choose to carol around his or her own neighborhood, it may be possible to engage more of the community in other settings. Look at local nursing homes or even community centers as caroling locations. Contact businesses along Main Street to see if caroling in the center of town to coincide with holiday shopping may be a good idea.

Compile a list of classics

Most people will want to hear the carols and other songs they know and love. Make a list of classic Christmas songs that aren't overly complicated and singers will already know how to sing, such as "Jingle Bells," "Deck the Halls," "Frosty the Snowman," and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." If a particularly accomplished singer is in the group, he or she might do a featured solo. Be sure to have printed copies of the lyrics and sheet music for all participants.



Enlist some musicians

Although caroling is traditionally done a capella, having someone who plays an instrument, like a guitar or violin, can ensure everyone is on the right note and can keep the pace of each song.

Plan to rest

Singing can be joyful, but also tiring. Bring along refreshments so the carolers can rest their voices and stop to grab a drink or snack. Tea, coffee and cocoa can warm up participants on chilly days. Perhaps make one of the caroling stops in front of a local coffee shop and pop in after a set.

Coordinate attire

Although everyone does not have to dress alike, a similar element, such as a red scarf or green mittens, can unite the group.

Add a charitable element

Consider incorporating a charitable aspect to the caroling. Collect financial or food donations for a local food pantry, or do a toy drive while caroling, encouraging people to offer a wrapped gift in exchange for some beautiful music.

Christmas music often sets the holiday scene, and carolers can bring familiar songs into neighborhoods this time of year.

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, good will toward men
— Luke 2:14



With exceeding great joy, we wish you and your family all the blessings of this holy season.

Merry Christmas

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