

Maybe Christmas can draw us back to that. It can become a compass re-orientating us to what God is doing in the world: bringing more light, love, and life. It can be a time to set habits that move us closer to being people who share light, love, and life all the time.

I hope you read this with a growing sense of freedom to let go of some of the traditions that don't quite connect for you. But may you also be inspired to grab hold of some expressions of light, love, and life during the Christmas season. How can you shed a bit more light into the world? How do you plan to share love with others? What do you plan to do that offers experiences of life to others?

May Christmas simply be a reminder. May it draw us back to the heart of God's gift made in Jesus, drawing our attention back to practices of light, love, and life.

But the traditions aren't the point. The season isn't even the point. Light, love, and life are the point.

There are many who shirk anything having to do with Christmas because our celebrations seem hollow. We're not supposed to act with grace and peace during one season a year. We're supposed to be people of light, love, and life ALL THE TIME.



the Bridge

Connecting local churches to each other & ministries around the world



"Today we associate a lot with Christmas that was not present at the first Christmas... But they can also be wonderful reminders of what is at the heart of Christmas."

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 *The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.*

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The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit: www.unyumc.org



Merry Christmas from Bishop Webb



This December, as we celebrate Advent, we also say goodbye to Bishop Mark J. Webb as the Area Resident bishop of the Upper New York (UNY) Conference. Bishop Webb retires from the UNY Conference on Dec. 31.

In his final annual Christmas video, Bishop Webb thanks laity and clergy across the Conference for what he calls the “privilege” of being able to partner in mission with them.

And as he has done each year, Bishop Webb offers an inspiring message, asking you to allow God to give you new eyes to see the amazing grace offered through the person of Jesus Christ.

Visit: <https://vimeo.com/uppernewyork/christmas2022> to watch the video or scan this QR code.



Welcome from Bishop Hector

Get excited for Upper New York’s new bishop, Bishop Héctor Burgos! He wants to be on a first-name basis with you, so he asks that you call him Bishop Héctor.

Bishop Héctor is thrilled with the strong missional foundation we have in Upper New York!

He has five priorities when working among the clergy and laity of our Conference.



Visit <https://vimeo.com/uppernewyork/bishophector> or scan the QR code to access his video, giving you a warm welcome and outlining his priorities.



Rethinking the Christmas tradition

By Ryan Dunn,
Minister of Online Engagement for Rethink Church.

Why do we do what we do at Christmas?

Jesus was not (likely) born on Dec. 25. No one set up a decorated tree next to the manger in Bethlehem. We don’t have any record of the holy family celebrating the impending birth of the Christ child through a series of company parties and familial gatherings. They didn’t send out cards. The shepherds didn’t come bearing cookies and fruit cakes.

For crying out loud, there was no little boy who showed up and bashed a drum cradle-side while baby Jesus happily slept.

Today we associate a lot with Christmas that was not present at the first Christmas. These new associations often become distractions from the intent of Christmas. But they can also be

wonderful reminders of what is at the heart of Christmas.

The first chapter of the biblical book of John provides a great representation of what happened at the first Christmas: a gift came into the world, a wonderful gift of light. The light was love—a love that dispels darkness, coldness, and fear. The light was present in Jesus. Jesus was given that the world may see a witness to light, love, and life.

Light. Love. And life.

Those are the gifts of Christmas. Our strange traditions are meant to call our attention back to those words and ideas. We celebrate Christmas to once again be inspired by light, love, and life. Trees remind us of life, even the midst of the longest, coldest nights. The lights remind us of the One Light that dispels darkness. The gifts invite us to share and experience love.

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