

Consider traveling by a different route. Maybe that means taking the back way home from work or stopping by that roadside attraction as you return from Grandmother's house. Let the new journey remind you that we are to follow Jesus wherever he leads.

**Have mealtime devotions**

Each of the 12 days of Christmas, spend some time during a meal for family reflection. Ask questions. Share concerns. Tell stories. Give thanks. Sense the presence of Jesus among you.

**Pray for the persecuted**

Those of us privileged to live in places where we are free to pursue our faith sometimes forget there are people in other places whose celebrations of Christmas could come at the cost of their freedom or lives. Read about Christians being persecuted for their faith in places like Syria and Nigeria, a pastor recently imprisoned in North Korea, and others. Then take some special time to pray for them.

**Record aha moments**

Christmas can be a time of important moments you do not want to forget. A quiet moment with a relative may remind you of the importance of family. A worship service may give you new insight

into how to live as a follower of Jesus. A frustrating experience in a store may encourage you to be more patient. Write those insights some place you can return in the weeks and months ahead for a reminder.

**Plant a tree**

At Christmas, we celebrate the gift of new, eternal life we have received in Christ. The evergreen trees we decorate are a symbol of everlasting life. Planting a tree or caring for the earth in another way can serve as a wonderful reminder of our call to be people who celebrate life.

**Begin a faithful intention**

Many people make New Year's Resolutions to lose weight or give up an unhealthy habit. Consider a faithful intention this year to help you grow in your spiritual life. Rather than waiting until January 1 to begin, start during the Christmas season.

**Be a person of peace**

We may not be able to do much to promote world peace, but we have the power to make the world around us more peaceful. Spend the 12 days of Christmas practicing ways you can eliminate harsh words, anger, and other negative attitudes from your life.



*"At Christmas, we celebrate the gift of new, eternal life we have received in Christ." Read more on page 3.*

Quiz Answer Key				
1. d	3. a	5. d	7. b	9. d
2. c	4. b	6. d	8. c	10. e

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**What's inside**

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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 United Methodist Christmas Quiz

In the spirit of Christmas, take this short quiz to test your knowledge on the history and tradition of the season of Christmas.



- 1.) The first Christmas trees were decorated with what items
  - a. Apples
  - b. White candy canes
  - c. Pastries shaped like hearts, stars, or flowers
  - d. All of the above
- 2.) What favorite Christmas carol was written by Charles Wesley?
  - a. White Christmas
  - b. Away in a Manger
  - c. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
  - d. I'll be Home for Christmas
  - e. Jingle Bells
- 3.) Jesus was born in Bethlehem. What does the Hebrew word "bethlehem" mean?
  - a. House of bread
  - b. Little town
  - c. City of David
  - d. Village of stars
  - e. Family of Elizabeth
- 4.) How is the Christ Child depicted in most Nativity scenes?
  - a. Sleeping
  - b. With arms outstretched
  - c. Standing
  - d. Holding a sword
- 5.) In many Nativity sets and Christmas scenes, what color is Mary's dress?
  - a. Blue
  - b. Green
  - c. Purple
  - d. Red
  - e. Yellow
- 6.) What do scholars say is the significance of the shepherds at the manger?
  - a. To represent the common man
  - b. To represent David, the shepherd who became king
  - c. To denote Jesus' ancestral lineage
  - d. All of the above
- 7.) What is a manger?
  - a. The French word for crib
  - b. Feeding trough
  - c. A cave
  - d. Wooden cradle
- 8.) Who do scholars speculate the Magi actually were?
  - a. Estate owners from nearby
  - b. Wealthy doctors
  - c. Astronomers or sages
  - d. All of the above
- 9.) One of the wise men gave the gift of myrrh, which is:
  - a. Middle Eastern money
  - b. A brewed drink
  - c. An easily shaped metal
  - d. A perfume
  - e. Rare, expensive food
- 10.) Which historic period(s) mentions fruitcake?
  - a. Ancient Egypt
  - b. Roman Empire
  - c. Middle Ages
  - d. Victorian England
  - e. All of the above

# Celebrate Christmas after Christmas Day! Here's how:

By Joe Iovino  
*works for UMC.org*

Did you know that Christmas is not just one day, but a season of 12 days from sunset Christmas Eve (Dec. 24) through Epiphany (Jan. 6). The 12th day of Christmas, Epiphany, commemorates the visiting of the Christ Child by the Magi (Wise Men) with their gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. Gift giving in some cultures extends throughout the 12 days of Christmas; elsewhere, gift giving is limited to Christmas Eve or Christmas Day or January 5 or 6.

To help celebrate the season, here are 12 creative, simple ideas that have nothing to do with partridges or lords-a-leaping.

## Have a silent night

One evening, turn off everything electronic and share Christmas memories. Go through old photos. Watch family movies (you might need to turn on the television for that). Ask others to tell of their favorite family Christmas tradition, and a joy-filled memory of a Christmas past. Spend a few moments talking about the Christmas story and the characters with whom you most relate.

## Sing the songs of Christmas

We sing many Christmas carols without thinking much about the words. Take some time to research the lyrics of songs as you sing

them. Where is the author biblically accurate? Where did she or he take poetic license? This is a great way to learn the biblical accounts of the Christmas story and some of the symbolism used.

## Don't return—give

Rather than returning the ugly sweater you'll never wear or the kitchen gadget you'll never use, give it away! Many places and individuals will benefit from those unwanted items. The sweater will keep someone warm, and the gadget will be sold in a secondhand store to generate funds for a ministry.

## Pray through your un-decorating

As you put away the Christmas decorations, consider the symbols of the tree and evergreens, the nativity, the wreath, and more. Pray that those signs may get packed away for 11 months, but the spirit of Christ will continue to be alive in you throughout the year ahead.

## Travel by a different route

The Christmas story contains several journeys—Mary visits Elizabeth; Mary and Joseph travel to be taxed; the Wise Men follow the star to Bethlehem, and Jesus and his family move to Egypt when King Herod orders the slaughter of baby boys. Many of us go on special journeys over Christmas, in addition to the time we spend in the car every day.

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