

In the Orchard

Christmas Memories

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.
John 14:11

No other season emphasizes the festive fare more than Christmas Time. You know – the time-honoured baking that comes only once a year. From the parade of spicy fruit cake and mince pie, delicate shortbread and frosted pound cake that would march to the dining room table on the best china of two and three-tier plates; to the delectable past confectionaries of colourful ribbon candy, animal-shaped clear toys, pink chicken bones, and sweet bridge mixture that graced the small crystal bowls and newly-polished silver trays when company came.

In the midst of our own growing up, my brother and I were never in want of life's necessities, least of all food. There was never a time of scarcity nor empty plates like our Dad experienced when he emigrated from

England with his parents. A long-ago memory during the we-believed-Santa-existed times were the lumpy stockings that would lay under the tree on those magical mornings. My brother and I would gather each one, eagerly running upstairs to our parents' bed. Everyone took their turn to reveal the unwrapped treasures of perhaps a colouring book, a toy watch, or maybe crayons or lifesavers but always an orange or apple. But Dad's was always left to the end. His long black wool
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Christmas Memories (cont.)

stocking was the largest - the one he wore in the navy during World War II. But inside, each item was individually wrapped in shiny holiday paper. As he slowly tore each apart, the contents would show an onion, carrots, the odd potato, and on occasion a can of brown beans. The deeper he dug, the more agricultural items burst forth. Dad's feigned disgruntlement was always upstaged by our fits of laughter. Dad had such joy in the role he played; and every year, it remained unchanged.

Whatever their circumstances, children have a tendency to think every child

grows up similarly. It would not dawn on them to think otherwise unless a situation presented itself. But you see, I have another memory. I was about eleven. Two days before Christmas, Dad returned home after gifting food. After overhearing him describe to Mum how the children gathered near their mother as he carried in several boxes of groceries, I can still hear those two words he uttered, "She cried."

Joy does wear many masks.

Corinne Hoebers is retired and lives in Kentville.



*Corrine's father in Niagara Falls.
Corrine with her mother and
brother David.*



Rev. Don's Message: Shake it Up!

Oh Advent, I have been longing for you to arrive! It is kind of odd now that I think about it – longing to get to the season of waiting. Even more so given that I am writing this from a waiting room chair in the Emergency Ward at Valley Regional Hospital patiently (no pun intended) waiting for my turn.

This is our third Advent and Christmas under the shadow of the pandemic and we are all anxious to get back to normal. But really, how often is it ever normal again? The pandemic may have caused some hearts to be hardened, but I am certain that many more hearts have been forever warmed to a new normal and a new way of being human in a world that often feels inhumane.

When we lose a loved one from our lives, there may be a new normal developing, but the old normal is gone. Change can be difficult. When our family grows, or we become part of a faith family, things change, and that change is good.

We have been through so many changes and disruptions over the past few years that just some semblance of routine would be welcome. Our temporary home in the County Fair

Mall has been a good experience, but it will never feel normal. When we see the pictures and videos of our church home being torn apart, rebuilt, and expanded, at least if you are anything like me, I long to be back to the normalcy of our church home. But of course, it too will have to be a new normal. There is no going back to what was. Change is rarely easy.

With that in mind, it might seem odd that I am anxious to get into Advent and Christmas. After all, it is one of the busiest times of the year for both clergy and our congregations. For me there are at least 5 additional services in the few weeks of Advent. Who could be blamed for wondering if Advent and Christmas could use a big shaking up?

But here's the thing – I long for Advent because it is not more work. When you do what you love, and do it with the people you love, it is not work but joy. Advent is about waiting, longing, getting ready, and shaking us up to what this season is all about.

It is about something new. Something exciting. Something with promise. Something with hope. Something that brings joy. Something that grants peace. Something that

(cont. on pg. 4)

Shake it Up! (cont.)

shouts out love like few others can do. As this Christ child comes again into

So, maybe it is not Advent and our lives, it is my prayer that we Christmas that need a shaking up. will discover that the new normal And maybe it is not the rest of the can be as hope and joy filled as year that needs it. When what should the old normal was – or even better. be a joy feels like work, when we Allow Jesus coming into our lives stop looking forward to what is next, to change us again, and may our maybe we need Advent to help us eyes be re-opened to the needs see and experience life in new ways. and wonders this season can

This year, a new child is being embody, like a newborn child. born into our lives once again. And Happy Advent and Merry Christmas once again we can experience all that my Friends. a new child represents – promise, hope, joy, peace, and of course, love.

Rev Don

Pastor Katie's Message: In the Season of Change

To think we've been together for and we're changing again once our an entire year and a half now! It new home is done. We've dealt with feels like it's been 10 years and also changing regulations around the 2 weeks at the same time in the pandemic, and a world of changing best way. I'm so grateful to Orchard politics. However in the midst of all Valley for becoming my home. this change there is one ever unfailing Although this year has presented a thing that stays true no matter what few challenges for me I am so grateful the year presents us with. God's love. for all the wonderful moments I've

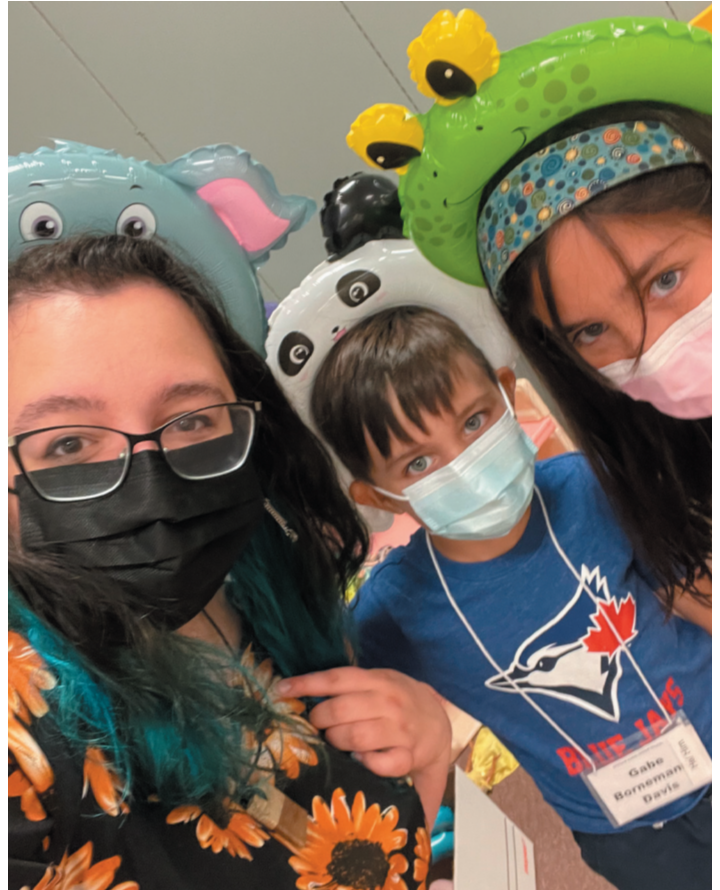
had here and all the happy memories When things get to be too much I I have as part of my student ministry. remember God loves me no matter what and even if it feels like the world This year has been a year of change is against me I know the Holy Spirit for all of us. We've changed locations is with me. The same goes for you.

No matter how difficult life gets God is on your side, God is with us in our anxiety, in our sadness, in our joy and in our grief. In our happiness and in our loving, God is there.

Here's a little exercise I learned a long time ago that helps me feel God's presence. First find a comfortable place, next place your hands face down on your lap and while you do this give all your emotions, feelings, and thoughts to God. Once you feel like you've got everything out, shift your hands to face the sky, take in what God has for you, listen, find your calm and remember,

God is with you, always.
Pastor Katie

Katie, Gabe and Micah show off their new animal balloon hats in Voyagers.



Mindy's Message: A Year of Yes

It's hard to know what to say in the Advent newsletter. Christmas is a time when we focus on both God's gift to us of Jesus long in the past, and on sharing our love with others now as a result. But I feel that both Don and Katie are more qualified than I to reflect on both the story around the birth of our savior, and with how we as a church family respond to Christmas now. So...I thought I might instead take a peek at the future, or, at least, look one week ahead, to New Year's Eve.

New Year's Eve is a grand time for resolutions. Some think resolutions are silly, and if you want to do something then you don't need to wait for New Year's Eve to commit to it. Or maybe you are like me, making all these great resolutions to lose that 5 (..no..10..no...40) pounds, or exercise every day, or quit drinking coffee, or whatever things are on your mind. I don't keep resolutions well (hence, now up to 40 pounds to lose...sigh), and even loud proclamations of my

Mindy's Message: A Year of Yes (cont.)

resolutions haven't made me adhere to them any better in the past. Since I gather that the best time of year to buy used gym equipment is in February, I may not be the only one that doesn't stick well to resolutions.

Last year, I made a new, tiny, silent resolution. I would try to live a Year of Yes. Nobody would need to know but me if I succeeded or failed.

That year is almost done, and I am starting to talk about it.

This has nothing to do with the book *A Year of Yes*, I've never read it. Nothing to do with the comedic movie 'Yes Man', where the main character can't say no, and gets stuck in some crazy adventures...that's not what my Year of Yes means. Instead, over the last year, when opportunities appeared before me where someone needed help, and if I was in a position to provide help, and if I could fit it into my life, I would say ...Yes.

What did a Year of Yes turn into for me? Well, I can say that it's been exhausting at times...mostly because it has opened my eyes to the fact that there are so many people/groups/businesses that need some kind of help.

To be clear, this isn't monetary help as much as giving of time & effort. But on the other hand...I have now done things that I have never done before, learned things that I never knew, met people I would never have otherwise, been places I'd never been, all because it helped someone in some tiny way. These tiny, positive differences, even though only in a tiny part of the world, have even made me feel a whole lot better about me than I did a year ago.

It's been a good year. It's been a God-filled year.

So here's my little nudge for you...take the Christmas spirit with you into the New Year...and on New Year's Eve, make a tiny, silent resolution to give a Year of Yes a try. Nobody will know but you if you succeed or fail. Nobody but you will measure the number of Yes-es you can fit in. Nobody will measure how big the impact has been.

And maybe next year, if you felt like it, you could just come whisper in my ear and tell me 'it's been a good year'.

My family and I wish you and yours a most blessed Christmas and Happy New Year,
Mindy Vinqvist-Tymchuk

New Directory: Will We See You in It?

by Jane MacDonald

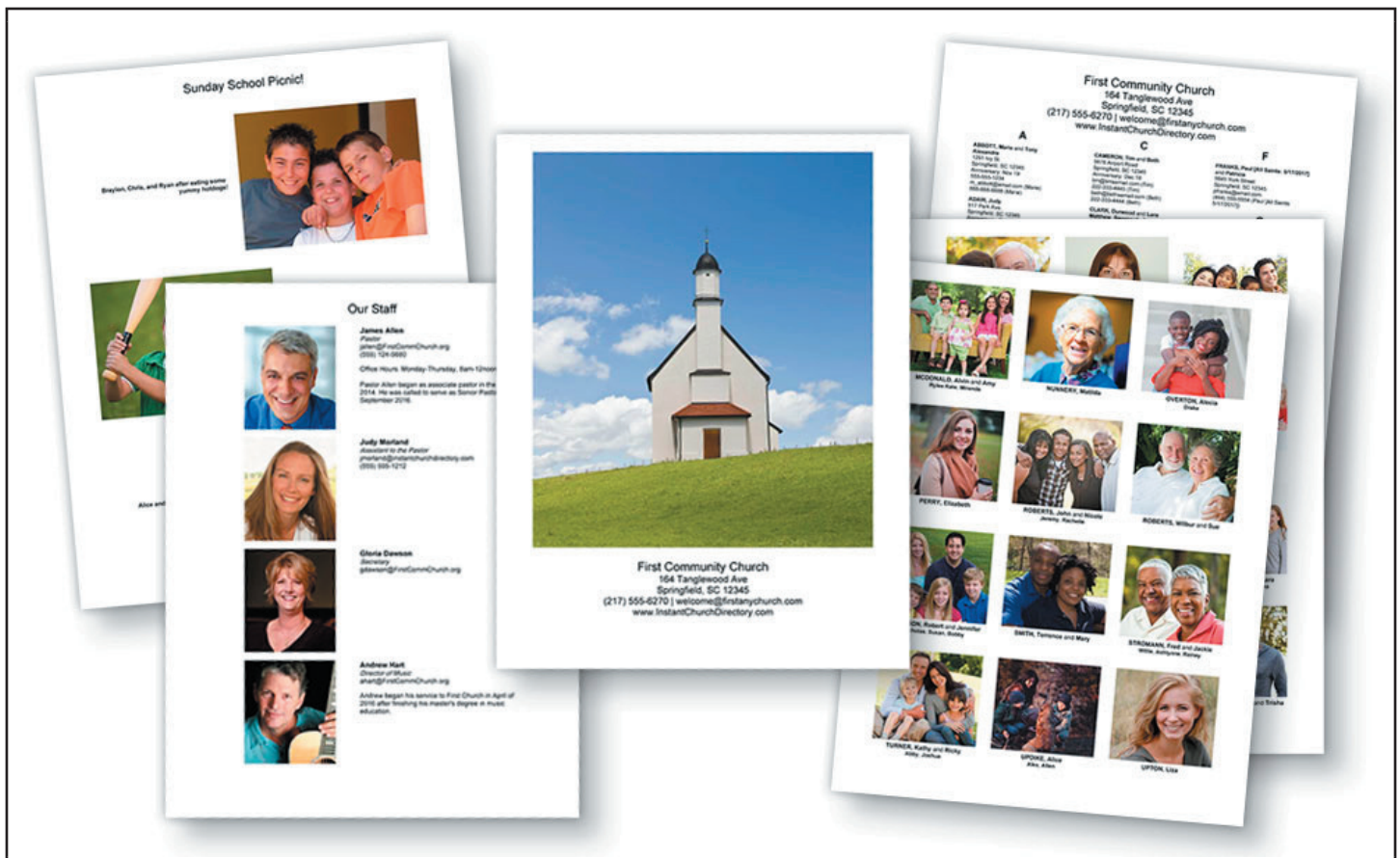
Thank you to all who have filled out their survey. We are continuing to work on the project with about 60% of the database update completed. As information is collected, we are in putting it into the database system.

Once all the data is entered into the database we can then progress to the development and publication of the directory.

We have collected several photos from many of our members. We hope to organize an afternoon prior to Christmas to have pictures taken for

those who wish to update their picture or a new one if they don't have one available. Please call the office and leave your name and contact number with Rachel McLean-Hawley, our Admin Assistant and when we have arrangements made, we'll be in contact.

We hope to have the directory out by the end of March at the latest. The directory will be available as a pdf or limited supply of printed copies. For those that have indicated on their survey they wish a printed copy we have captured that information and thank you.



Making Room to Include Everyone

by Gary Dunfield

The renovated and expanded home for Orchard Valley United Church continues to take shape and the Facilities committee can't wait for you to see it when complete, something that should happen in about four months. From the photos we see that the walls and ceilings are coved in the new Sanctuary and that they will soon start painting. The choir room also has Gyproc and will be ready to paint soon. The renovated portion will see Gyproc this week and they have started the siding on the west side.

We look forward to returning to our new/renovated home and have started plans on replacing furniture that will need updating, looking at how to best use the space and getting plans in place to make the big move back.

Thanks to the Facilities Committee: Harvey Gilmour, Don Sellsted, Cupido Daniels, Jane McDonald and David Murphy.

Thanks to those who are helping with plans for the big move and we look forward to worshiping in our new home by April if not a bit before.



Top left: Rear of sanctuary, Bottom left: Front of sanctuary. Top right: Outside siding,



Top left: Looking out to the entrance.

Top right: Nursery area.

Bottom left: Sunday School area.

Everyone is Welcome Here!

by Vicky Austin & Dale MacArthur
Everyone is Welcome Here!

An Affirming Ministry invites and welcomes everyone to worship and participate in the life of the church, inclusive of age, gender, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability/disability, ethnic background or economic circumstances. Orchard Valley United Church celebrated its official designation as an Affirming Ministry on Pride Sunday, June 5, 2022.

Our journey began in 2019 when we formed a small but mighty committee to begin the Affirming process. Among many educational goals and requirements along the way, we achieved the four essential elements that needed approval by Affirm United Canada: an Inclusive Marriage Policy, an Inclusive Mission Statement, a long-range Action Plan and a majority vote of approval from the congregation. With an overwhelmingly positive vote at the March 2022 AGM, we were approved for official designation as an Affirm United Ministry.

Our service included guest speaker Caitlin Smithers, a student at the Atlantic School of Theology and the

Centre for Christian Studies. Rev. Kim Curlett, Coordinator of Affirming Ministry Programs for Atlantic Canada and Quebec, presented the official Affirming Ministry Certificate to Orchard Valley United and the Affirming committee. Rev. Don Sellsted read a formal letter of acknowledgement and celebration from The Right Reverend Richard Bott, Moderator of the United Church of Canada. Our own Rachel MacLean and Frank Hartman composed and performed original songs for this special and joyous occasion accompanied by Dave Murphy.

We invite you to investigate the titles of our educational resources for children, youth and adults on the Orchard Valley website, under Committees. All of the books listed are available to borrow.

New additions to the Affirming Library include these Indigenous Resources thoughtfully chosen by Pastor Katie.

- Giju's Gift by Brandon Mitchell
- She Holds up the Stars - Sandra Laronde
- Sweetgrass by Theresa Meuse
- Rabbit Chase by Elizabeth LaPensee
- The Power of Style by Christian Allaire.

As this year draws to a close and



*The Affirming Committee and Guests. Seated: Dale MacArthur, Vicky Austin
Standing: Rev. Kim Curlett, Cheryl Sellsted, Rev Don Sellsted, Chris Seymour, Julien
Davis, Cheryl MacDonald, Pastor Katie Logan, Caitlin Smithers. Missing from photo:
Carol Wooster, Jean Illingworth.*

“Thought-Provoking Message”

Tamsin Michael Robson (who goes by the pronouns they and she) is a genderqueer, transfeminine preacher, educator and composer from Halifax. Having grown up Lutheran, they eventually found their vocation to ministry through the United Church of Canada and quite possibly, their niche at Halifax’s one-year-old Queer Spirit Church.

Tamsin is currently in



the process of finishing a Master of Divinity degree at the Atlantic School of Theology, where her graduate research project took a deep dive into the spirituality of her fellow trans and non-binary people.

We thank Tamsin for sharing her powerful and thought-provoking message during our Transgender Day of Remembrance service on November 20th.

Christmas Hampers Helping Families

by Helen Seymour

Orchard Valley United Church set Outreach as a priority several years ago and remains true to the word. This Christmas we will be gifting Christmas Hamper grocery Gift Cards to 50 families in the local area.

In the Kentville and New Minas area, Orchard Valley is involved in the actual planning and disbursement of the hampers. We support the program with volunteers to represent Orchard Valley on this committee; volunteers to register individuals and families as well as volunteers to deliver the

Christmas Hampers in the Kentville/New Minas area. In addition to helping these families, Orchard Valley donates \$500 to both Canning and Wolfville (WAICC) for their Hamper expenses. The anticipated cost for this is \$5200.

I am pleased to report that we have now received enough donations to cover the costs for all of our commitments.

Whether you have donated to the Canning Interchurch Council, WAICC or contributed to the Hamper program, 'thank you' so much for making Christmas special for all families in the Valley.



Many members of the congregation have volunteered to help with the various aspects of the Christmas Hamper Program over the years. Here are just a few of them. First row: Doug MacKinnon, Sheila Francis, Frank Hartman, Second row: Gail Gordon, Sarah Hartman, Sylvia Delisle, Helen and Chris Seymour, Dale MacArthur. Missing: Pat and Rebecca Godfrey, Sheila Fisher, Susanne and Scott Sweatman.

Season of Songs

by Thea Burton, Music Director

Advent and Christmas are exciting times for the choir. On Dec. 18, the choir and youth will present the Nativity Story in scripture and song. With a combination of chimes, small groups, congregational hymns and choir anthems, we will incorporate hymn tunes from different cultures, and sing in different languages including German, French and Japanese.

In addition to a solo for the longest night service, we are planning two beautiful anthems for Christmas Eve at the 4 & 11 pm services. Caroline Burton will be joining the choir virtually and singing two solos at the Covenant service.



We hope our words and music help to bring us together as a church family, and deepen the spirit of the season.

Growing up, my home was full of music. After Sunday dinner we would gather around the piano to sing hymns and epic pieces like The Holy City. In addition to the profound sense of family love, what I remember most about that time was my mother reminding us that the words and the message are what is important, and the music helps to connect them to our emotions and inner spirit.

During this period of waiting and remembering the gift of love God gives us through retelling of the Christmas story, I hope the words and music we share will help to deepen your understanding of God's love and inspire you to share that love by welcoming the one in need into your hearts and home.



First row: Marilyn Whiteway, Thea Burton, Carmen Peng, Shirley Yorke, Annette Wray, Donna Murphy. 2nd row: Brenda Parker, Norma Mailman, Vera Burke, Betty Rockwell, Angela Whiteway, Mary McFarland, Cheryl Sellsted 3rd row: Christina MacDonald, Mindy Vinqvist-Tymchuk, Chris Seymour, Johann Botha, Dave Murphy Missing: Scott Sweatman, Roger Bolt, Cupido Daniels, Fred Lipskey, Nancy Handrigan, Pat Godfrey, Debbie Mailman, Rachel McLean-Hawley.

An Exciting Year for Voyagers!

by Pastor Katie Logan

What a year we've had! Last year we started off on a great note with our white gift service bringing in a bunch of kids to celebrate with Santa! This year we hope to do the same on December 4th. Although we can't enjoy over pancakes, the amazing congregational life committee is going to provide some treats for coffee time!

We'll also be putting on a play about a special little mouse who helps a whole town realize the importance of the Christmas Spirit. We also have our nativity play coming up on December 18th where all are welcome to join in for this musical and theatrical celebration! If you're interested let me know!

A year in reflection reminds me of

all the awesome times we've had this year. From our massive Easter egg hunt, our vacation Bible Camp and our action-packed Halloween party, we've had non-stop laughter and fun this year with all our youth and kids!

We've also had a great year learning about our faith in Voyagers on Sunday learned about taking care of creation, friendship, and prayer! All these things have helped us grow and learn together and we can't wait for the year ahead!

Our youth are super excited about moving into the new space and seeing what we can do to make the rooms our new home.

So from all of us to you, Merry Christmas!



Oggie, Aiden and Andy crafting at our Vacation Bible Camp.



An exciting end to Vacation Bible camp with our youth leaders Maddie and Jacob and our campers Aiden, Cameron, Isaiah, Sofia and Emmitt!



Jacob, Maddie and Dexter with volunteers from VCLA working on their very own books.

Katie, Cam and Isaiah crafting some awesome lambs at Vacation Bible Camp.



Addy, Teagan, Katia, Noah, Wesley, Gabe and Micah with their leader Cheryl at Voyagers on Easter Morning with hand-dyed eggs!

Remington (Remy) decorates one of our seven Christmas trees.

A Possible Meaning of “The 12 Days of Christmas”

From *The Meaning and History of Christmas Traditions* comes this story about the possible religious meanings of the gifts given during “The Twelve Days of Christmas” (the days between Christmas and Epiphany).

- A partridge in a pear tree represents Jesus Christ whose birthday is celebrated on the first day of Christmas. A partridge is a bird that will die to protect its young.

- Two turtledoves represent the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

- Three French hens represent faith, hope, and love, referring to the famous love chapter of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13.

- Four calling birds represent the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

- Five golden rings represent the first five books of the Old Testament—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—also known as the Torah or Pentateuch.

- Six geese a-laying represent the six days God used for Creation.

- Seven swans a-swimming represent the

seven gifts of the Holy Spirit—prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and compassion.

- Eight maids a-milking represent how Jesus came to save everyone, even those in lowly positions like milkmaids.

The number eight might refer to the beatitudes, where Jesus blessed the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake (Matthew 5:3-10).

- Nine ladies dancing represent the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

- Ten lords a-leaping represent the Ten Commandments.

- Eleven pipers piping represent Jesus’ disciples. Originally twelve, but since Judas betrayed Jesus, only 11 remain.

- Twelve drummers drumming are the pts. of doctrine in the Apostles’ Creed.

