

Celebrating the Holidays

VOL. 2

NISQUALLY
VALLEY NEWS



Photos by Eric Rosane/Nisqually Valley News

Above: Over 700 segmented strips of lights wrap around the Flott's house and property.

Top right: A small family of snowmen are just some of the many homemade light displays the Flott family have constructed.

Left: Angels and stars line a lit nativity scene outside of Farley's house.

Residents Radiating With Christmas Spirit

BY ERIC ROSANE
erosane@yelmonline.com

When it comes to the annual custom of putting up Christmas lights and decorations on front lawns, the tradition is special for Kevin Farley. Ever since he was little it's been something he's passionate about; more specifically, the way it brightens people's mood and brings people together.

For the third year, Farley, 53, of Yelm, will show off his grandiose Christmas display that he's so-far spent three months erecting.

A large inflatable snowman, ceramic choir boys and, of course, lights galore line a scenic holiday setting around his 5 acre property near the Centralia Canal

on Wilkensen Road. Over 247 displays have been erected thus far, Farley said, and he's planning for more.

Almost everyday, a brown UPS van drives down his narrow driveway; Farley said him and the UPS drivers are practically on a first name basis. Yearround, Farley is looking for his next addition — the next piece that will draw joy from adults and children alike.

"Some (people) just need a little lightness, more happiness," Farley said.

On warm days, when he's able to get some spare time and get out of the house, Farley works on maintaining, posing and constructing portions of his collection. Farley said work on his display has been

difficult with a nerve injury.

"When people say 'you're doing a lot for this,' I'm really doing a lot for this," Farley said.

What would take someone one month to accomplish has taken him three months, Farley said. But it's worth it.

In the coming years, Farley said he hopes to expand his display. His display currently takes up over half his property and he's looking to add more "blow-mos" and maybe an electric light show.

If you've recently driven pass Ridgeline Middle School, you've probably seen AnnaMarie and

Brian Flott's house. It's really hard to miss, given there's over 700 segments and tens of thousands of LED lights.

Every year, for the last 13 years in Yelm, the Flotts take to their shed and storage boxes after Thanksgiving to decorate their house in mass. On the first Saturday of December, the family then plugs in their lights.

Dozens of homemade wooden Santa, snowmen and elves loiter the yard, greeting visitors with smiles and gleeful smirks. Red, white and green lights line the family's house, windows and rain gutters, row by row. A giant metal frame arch glowing with lights towers over the families vehicles in their driveway.

Brian Flott said the tradition goes back to before they lived

in Yelm. Growing up, Christmas decorating was a family tradition him and his father would gleefully do each year. He said he really got into it after he joined the Airforce.

Every year the family tries to add something new from scratch.

"The family usually comes up with the idea and it's my job to figure it out," Brian Flott said.

During the month of December the Flott's electric bill triples and they annually replace about 20 segments, they said.

The Flotts never leave their lights on after around 10 p.m., except on Christmas. Being close to the house, the lights can get quite bright.

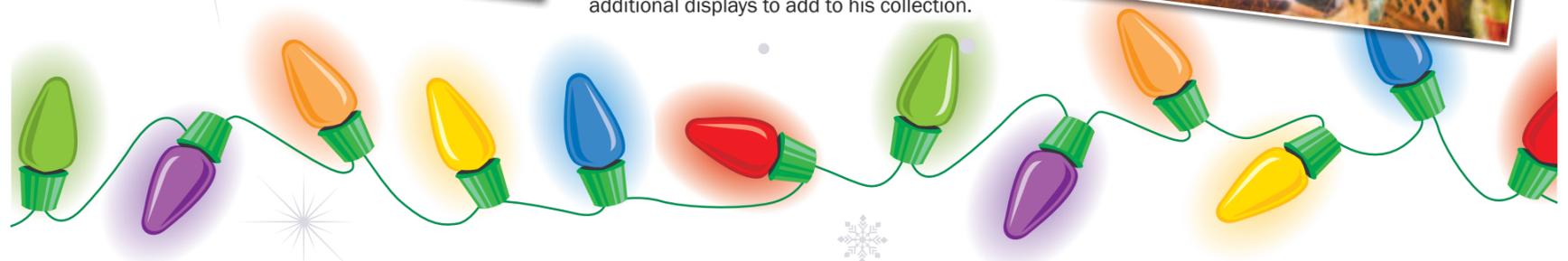
"I don't want to annoy the neighbors with lights all night long," Brian Flott said, humorously.

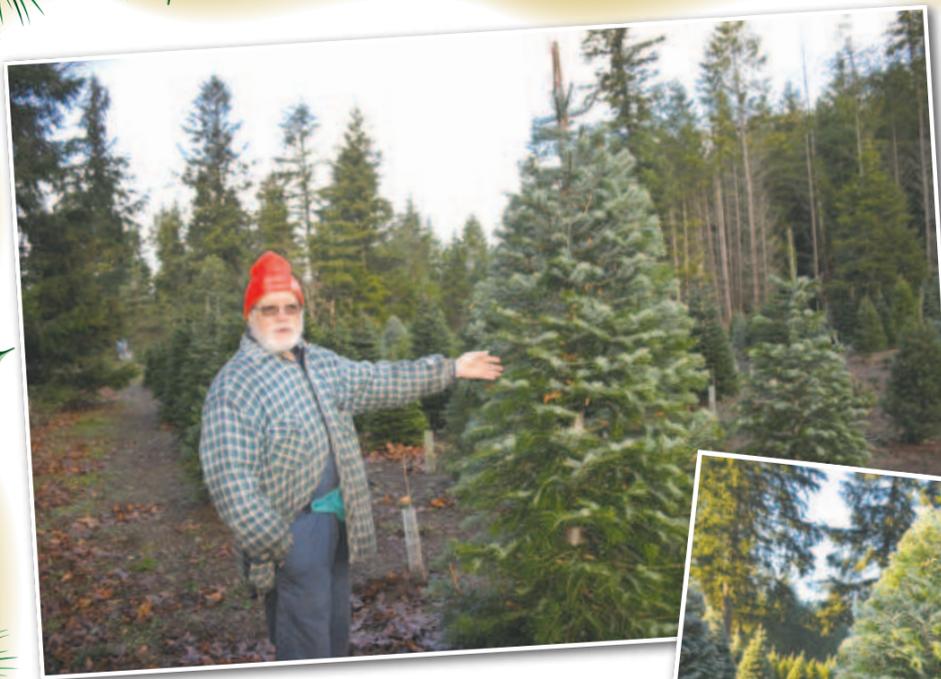
Inside the Flott's house, photos of their lawn decorations are arranged around a wooden frame on the kitchen wall — memories of Christmases past. It's a special time of year for them, even if their wallets say otherwise.



Left: A plastic light display of Peanuts and Woodstock welcome visitors on Monday night. Thousands of lights define the arches and walkways of Farley's showcases.

Above: From lit Star Wars inflatables to plastic glowing puppies are displayed. Right: Yearround, Kevin Farley looks for additional displays to add to his collection.





Photos by Daniel Warn/Nisqually Valley News
Left: Gregory Gerrits shows off a nordman fir, his best selling tree at \$40. They take up to 12 years to grow.

Below: Shelley Sprouffske shows off one of the tree farm's Noble Firs, which for Sprouffske Trees is the best selling tree on their property at \$50.



Shop in the Rainier Area for Christmas Trees, Receive Years of Wisdom

BY DANIEL WARN
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Christmas time is here, and that means many people will hoof it out onto a farm to cut down a Christmas tree.

Instead of putting up a fake version, the Sprouffskes and the Gerrits would like to invite area residents to try out the real thing.

Sprouffske Trees

The Sprouffske family have been Christmas tree farming together since the mid 1960s.

In 1965 Fred and Ethel Fay Spouffske decided to become tree farmers, and by 1966 that first generation of Sprouffske

tree farmers had approached their adult children, and formed an intergenerational family partnership to grow christmas trees.

“The statement my dad made when he asked us all in, was: ‘You know, the biggest potential to tear a family up is a family forming a business together,’” said Karen Creamer, Fred Sprouffske’s daughter. “And we said: ‘We won’t let it.’ Well, you get your miffs, but you get them straightened out and we’ve been going for 53 years since the partnership.”

The original members

included Fred and Ethel Fay Sprouffske, Nancy and Bill Roberts, Karen and Johnie Creamer, Larry and Mary Sprouffske as well as Jerry and Sandra Sprouffske.

Now, some of the members are deceased, but they leave behind a third and fourth generation of Sprouffske tree farmers. The oldest person still on the farm is Johnie Creamer at 79 years old, and the youngest person on the farm is little Alexander at 6.

“I think it’s fun as a family farm because you get to spend a lot of time together,” said Shelley Sprouffske, who married into the third generation of Sprouffske tree farmers. “We have Thanksgiving dinner at my house, then Christmas dinner up at Jerry and Sandy’s. If everyone is talking at both of those, it is a success. You get to spend a lot of time with family and most people don’t get to do that any more.”

Sprouffske Trees sells Douglas firs for \$30, grand firs for \$40 and noble firs for \$50. They also retail



Colorado Blue Spruce

decorative items like swags, wreaths, snowflakes, crosses, door arches, horse-head wreaths and wreath bows. Sprouffske Trees have also been wholesaling their trees to places like California since 1972.

Hot cocoa, Russian tea, hot tea, coffee and candy canes come free during the farm’s hours of operation: from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily at 14020 Finian Rd SE, Rainier.

Their business doesn’t just reach back into the 60’s. Sandra Sprouffske said it also reaches back into generations of repeat customers.

“We have a family from Puyallup that comes every year, and they were one of our first customers,” Sandra Sprouffske said. “They come every year so it’s been almost 50 years they’ve

■ SEE TREES, PAGE 3

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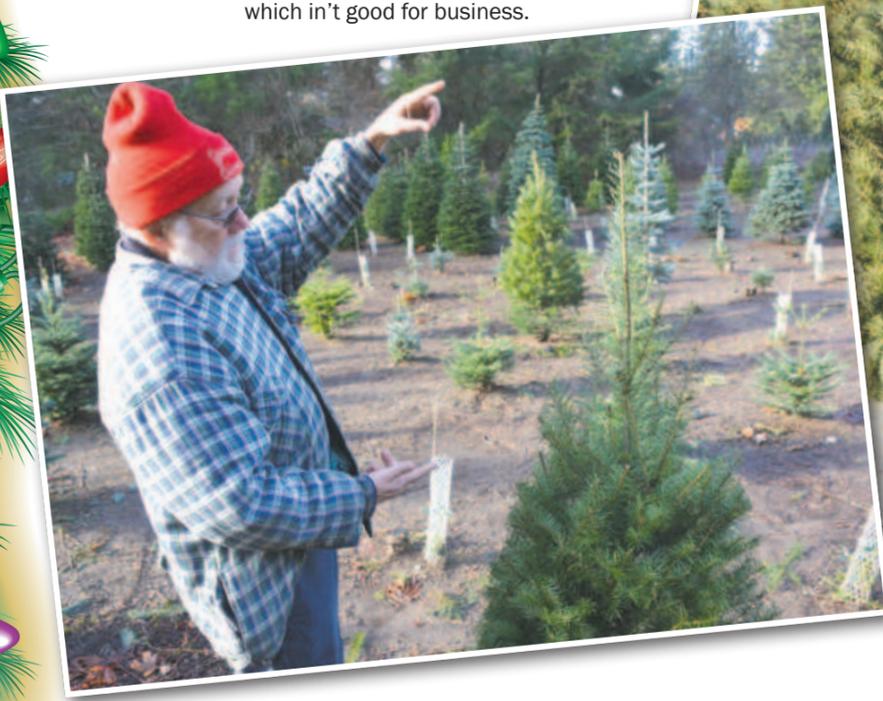
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Photos by Daniel Warr/Nisqually Valley News

Below: Gregory Gerrits measures the top of a Christmas tree. If the trunk near the top is too long, with little buds along it, then the tree is in danger of having a bare spot, which isn't good for business.



Above: Jerry Spouffske unloads Christmas trees at Sprouffske Trees.

TREES:

Continued From Page 2

been coming out here. Now I'm seeing her grandkids and her great-grandkids. So we've got some really long-lasting customers that are just sweethearts."

Gerrits Greens

Gregory Gerrits and his wife purchased the property that became Gerrits Greens in December of 1981.

"We cleared the land, then planted our first crop when my wife was pregnant with our daughter," Gerrits said. "It was early 1983."

When he and his family first started out, they had high aspirations, Gerrits said.

"We were going to have five areas, but now we have one, two, three areas," Gerrits said. "We planted area one in 1983 originally, and area two in 1984, but we had a high mortality rate, so for years and years we replanted and replanted to get them

them full and have people parking in the weeds."

He is open every day of the week from 9 a.m. to dusk off of Vail Cutoff Road. Call (360) 446-7199 for directions.

His trees range from \$20 to \$40 — the longer it takes to grow the tree, the more expensive it is. He grows Douglas firs, grand firs, cork bark firs, Korean firs, Colorado blue spruces, Canaan firs, shasta red firs, nordman firs, noble firs and Serbian spruces, to name several.

grown in about eight or nine years.

Corkbark Fir — This tree is native to the Arizona, New Mexico area. They have the look of a Colorado blue spruce, but their needles aren't sharp. They can have a bluish tint to them.

Colorado Blue Spruce — Gerrits quit growing the Colorado blue spruce and started growing the corkbark fir, he said, but won't know if that was a good idea until up to 12 years later.

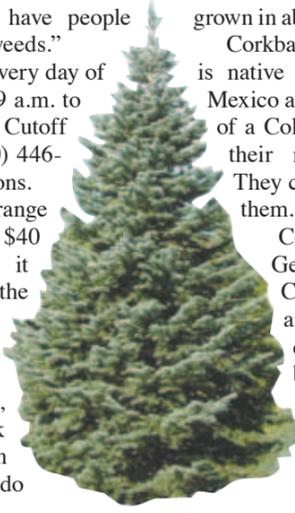
Shasta Red Fir — At one point, Gerrits probably had 3,500 of them, he said, but the ones he has left are getting a bit too big, causing him to have to make a decision in the

next few years about whether or not he'll plant any more of them.

Nordmann Fir — The ones Gerrits is really in love with are the nordman fir, he said, but there is a drawback to them. When he puts them in the ground, they're six to nine inches tall by three years old, then they sit there for a year or two and finally start growing. They take about 12 years to grow. And Gerrits says he can't grow them fast enough,

since about 85 percent of his sales are nordman.

Noble Firs — Gerrits calls these "a good Christmas tree," but in 1983 he planted 1,400 of them and within two years, 1,300 of them died. He said he thinks the reason that they didn't take at first was because he planted plugs instead of bare root and didn't have very good weed control. He has since resumed planting these trees.



Corkbark Fir



Douglas Fir

Here is Little More Information About Some of the Trees:

Douglas Fir — The tree is native to the area, so when Gerrits plants one, it only takes six or seven years until it can be sold.

Grand fir — This tree is also a native. It's a true fir and can be



Grand Fir

established. Then kids came along and you put everything on hold. We had area three planted when my son was in high school — in 2003 or 2004."

During Christmas season Gerrits wakes up early, and sometimes isn't done helping customers until he's finding trees by lantern-light, he said. Selling 95 percent of his trees on the weekend, the weekdays can be pretty droll, but he makes the best of it, welcoming guests and treating them like family. Plus, it gives him more time to baby his trees.

"On the weekends it is an absolute zoo," Gerrits said. "I have 25 parking spots marked out, and on a good weekend, I'll have every one of



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Local Grocery Chains Give Back This Season

BY ERIC ROSANE
erosane@yelmonline.com

For some, keeping money in the wallet and food on the table can be a difficult balance this time of year. Local grocery chains are looking to give back locally to help offset this worry.

Home Team Harvest, a seasonal food drive program put on by Northwest Harvest and KING

5 News, is one of many well-known drives locally that help give back to those in need.

At participating Safeway and Albertsons stores, customers can purchase “hunger bags,” containing shelf-stable foods such as mac n cheese, soups and rice. Bags will be tallied per store, then the food will be sent out from Northwest Harvest’s warehouse in Kent to local food banks.

“The food banks don’t have to

pick it up... it’s a really high volume of food,” said Sara Osborne, a spokesperson for Safeway.

These donations through the program stay local, so customers know they’ll be helping to benefit their community.

The Yelm Safeway has already exceeded its hunger bag goal of 1,800 by 155 bags already, and its still accepting them.

Hunger bags cost \$10 and can be purchased at the Yelm Safeway

at 1109 E Yelm Ave. The Home Team Harvest program runs all December long.

Yelm Walmart has recently been reducing food prices through programs and donated to 25 different programs this year, store manager Shey Pope said.

Pope said he’s hoping these contributions can make a positive impact in his store’s community.

“We’re a big part of a small community,” Pope said.

Walmart has donated to causes, such as Yelm Athletics, local schools and churches during the holiday season, Pope said.

It also matched NVN advertiser turkey donations to Yelm Community Services at Thanksgiving and committed to do the same with hams for the holidays. Each ad sold in this special section will offset the cost of a ham donation for YCS’ Christmas meal program.

Free Movie Toy Drive This Weekend

Watch ‘A Christmas Carol’ or ‘Fred Claus’

BY NISQUALLY VALLEY NEWS

Feel like catching a movie? Yelm Cinemas is offering a chance to do some good while watching one of two entertaining movies.

Yelm Cinemas is teaming up with the Yelm Midday Lions Club, Timberland Bank and the Nisqually Valley News for its toy drive and free movie. It is the sixth year they’ve held the event and for the first time attendees have two options to choose from.

Families or individuals can bring an unwrapped, new toy to the cinemas. In exchange, they’ll be able to watch either of the films for free before the cinema’s normal operating hours.

The event starts at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 15 with “Fred Claus” starting at 9 a.m. and “A Christmas Carol” starting at 9:10 a.m. Previous years have seen around 100 to 150 people

The film can be shown on more than one screen at once, so if one theater fills up, they’ll open up another one.

All the toys will be donated to Yelm Community Services, which will distribute them to families in need.

“The Lions Club has always been active in the community and the focus of the Midday Branch is local children,” said Yelm Midday Lions Club President Beatrix Austin. “It is an event that people look forward to. Some kids might not have a chance to go to the movie theater. This allows them to come to the movie, wear pajamas, get their picture taken with Santa and get a free snack pack. This is something special

for them to kick off their winter break.”

Yelm Cinemas rents the movie and provides staff and the facility. Timberland Bank has donated funds for the snack packs where every kid gets free popcorn, pop and candy. The Nisqually Valley News donates advertising to promote the event.

“When you see the children taking pictures with Santa, it’s a special event for them that they’ll always remember,” Austin said. “We, as a club, are very excited. The (cinemas) employees are usually

just delighted to see the children. It’s a win-win for everyone, and a special holiday thing for us all.”



Thank You to These Local Businesses!

Together, Christensen’s Home Furnishings, Yelm Community Schools and the Nisqually Valley News worked with the Angel Tree project. The effort was joined by these local businesses which each generously donated \$50 to the Angel Tree project.

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Yelm's Holiday Faith Traditions a Diverse Tapestry



Photo by Daniel Warr/Nisqually Valley News

Shelley Sprouffske lights the hope candle in St. Columban Catholic Church as part of her observance of the season of advent, which coincides with the Christmas season. Advent is all about the preparation of one's heart for the birth of Jesus.

BY DANIEL WARN

dwarn@yelmonline.com

With the holidays in full swing, many people have diverse traditions that they observe.

Whether a person identifies as Jewish or Catholic, there are those systems of faith that have holiday beliefs and traditions attached to them.

Here are just a few of these holiday traditions from churches and individuals that are located in the region.

Catholic

Shelley Sprouffske, a catholic who lives in Rainier, said the biggest tradition that catholics observe during the holidays is advent.

"That's the four weeks that lead up to Christmas," Sprouffske said. "And advent is all about preparation — so it's the waiting for Jesus, really making yourself ready for when he is born."

She said that she loves it because in the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season, it's easy to forget the reason for that season. Advent helps her focus on what really matters.

"We have the advent wreath," Sprouffske said. "It's usually evergreen, but it can really be anything. It's in a circle and has four candles — three of them are purple and one is pink."

On each of the four weeks of advent, another candle is lit, and each candle represents something else, all in the service of preparing hearts for the coming of Jesus.

The first candle represents hope, the second represents preparation, three is joy and the fourth one is love.

"We have an advent wreath, and it sits on our kitchen table," Sprouffske said. "We burn it down during dinner time."

Judaism

The people who go to the Chabad Jewish Center in Tumwater celebrate Chanuka — also spelled Hanukkah — every year.

But their tradition around the Jewish holiday is unique to them. They put up a giant menorah — which means candelabra — in a city park near them to let its light shine for all people in that area.

And this year, the jewish center brought their giant menorah to Yelm, starting a new tradition.

"For the first time we are putting up a giant menorah in City Park," said Rabbi Yosef Schtroks. "We will be there the whole week in memory of the Pittsburgh massacre a few weeks ago."

To celebrate Chanuka, observers will light a candle on the menorah, on each of the eight nights of the holiday. Then they will celebrate with donuts and other fried food.

The reason for the fried food, is because a person fries food in oil, and the holiday is all about light that came from oil. In ancient times, some jewish people were in a temple and they had lamps that could only be lit with a special kind of oil, Schtroks said. They thought they were out of the oil, but a small portion of it was found. To get new oil, it would

take eight days, so they lit their lamp with the rest of the special oil and prayed.

It lasted eight days.

Lutheran

Emanuel Lutheran Church of Yelm, a part of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) branch of Lutherans, is a Christian denomination that celebrates Christmas over the holidays.

Instead of a Christmas tree, Lutherans decorate what they call a "Chismon tree" in the foyer of their church building.

"The Chrismon tree was first used by North American Lutherans in 1957, and although later spread to other Christian churches, we Lutherans started it!" said Jeannie Davis, administrator of Emanuel Lutheran Church.

"For Christians, the traditional Christmas tree, 'symbolizes the eternal life Jesus Christ provides,'" she said. "The Chrismon tree differs in that it is decorated only with clear lights and Chrismon ornaments — these are only made from white, gold and silver materials — white is the church color for Christmas and symbolizes Jesus' majesty and glory — they are the liturgical colors of the Christmas season."

They even put Jesus' name and his title, Christ, on the tree

in Greek monograms, like when people put someone's name on a birthday cake, Davis said.

Emmanuel Lutheran also celebrates advent, but one of its candles differs in meaning from the Catholics. Dec. 2 of this year stands for hope; Dec. 9 stands for peace; Dec. 16 stands for joy; and Dec. 23 stands for love. On each of these dates, Emanuel Lutheran lights the candle corresponding to it.

Apostolic Pentecostal

Colton Wark, assistant pastor of Yelm Jesus Name Pentecostal Church, said that he assumes that his church does similar traditions to those of other Christian Denominations.

"We annually hold a 'Christmas Banquet,'" Wark said. "The Church provides a fantastic formal dinner meal. The decor and dress is formal, creating a wonderful atmosphere. Entertainment consists of Christian Songs, a few group games and light-hearted couples games."

Contrary to some other Christian denominations, Yelm JNPC doesn't use the Christmas theme in its worship services.

"For 2018, Sunday the 23rd will be just as any other service, with the continued expectation of

the Spirit of God filling our service," Wark said. "To us, this is as Christmas as it can get."

Evangelical Covenant

Crossroads Community Church, a part of the Evangelical Covenant denomination of Christianity, does a Christmas play every year — the proceeds of which go to helping people in need.

"The play is different each year, written and directed by Pat and/or Debbie MacNealy, our worship director and her husband," said Deborah Baker, ministry facilitator at Crossroads. "The play is very well done so much so that we have folks who don't attend our church who faithfully come back every year to see what the next play is."

While the play has already wrapped up, the performance helped a lot of struggling families in the Yelm prairie communities with food & gifts, Baker said.

Crossroads also provides Christmas food and hygiene baskets for "struggling folks who have no other resources," she said, the perfect Christmas gift for those who really need it.

Another tradition that Crossroads cherishes involves three candlelight services on Christmas Eve. The first one is kid-friendly,

so there is no flames, but the others feature a portion of the service done by candlelight.

Parishioners will also have the ability to dress up.

"This year we are having a Progressive Nativity where attendees can wear a costume as one of the characters of the Christmas story and come on stage when that portion for the story is told," Baker said. "By the end you have a stage full of folks representing the nativity."

United Methodist

The United Methodist denomination is another Christian tradition that uses an advent wreath and the lighting of its candles to help prepare parishioners for the coming of the Christ child.

"A denominational as well as a local Methodist church tradition is to celebrate when Jesus Christ came to humanity, which we know as Christmas," Pastor Douglas Thomison said. "Prior to Christmas arriving, we spend the month of December in preparation which we call Advent ('coming')."

The church also holds a Christmas Eve candlelight service, symbolizing the light of Christ as he comes into the world.

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Transform one vibrant holiday flavor into two festive treats that family and friends are sure to love. Nothing signals the holiday season like the sweet and spicy snap of gingerbread. Enjoy this must-have flavor in freshly baked Gingerbread Men Cookies or a Triple Chocolate Gingerbread cake.

Peppermint offers a refreshing, sweet taste that's perfect for gifted treats like Peppermint Crunch Popcorn and Peppermint Bars. Also, cinnamon stars twice as nice in a Peanut Butter Snickerdoodle Tart with Cinnamon Peanut Crust and decadent Cinnamon Caramel Swirl Bars.

Find more gingerbread, peppermint and cinnamon treats at McCormick.com.



Triple Chocolate Gingerbread

Triple Chocolate Gingerbread

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 50 minutes
Servings: 16

- 1 package (2-layer size) chocolate cake mix
- 1 package (4-serving size) chocolate instant pudding mix
- 4 eggs
- 1 tablespoon McCormick Ground Ginger
- 1 teaspoon McCormick Ground Cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon McCormick Ground Allspice
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup molasses
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup miniature chocolate chips

nonstick baking spray with flour

Heat oven to 350 F. In large bowl, using electric mixer on low speed, beat cake mix, pudding mix, eggs, ginger, cinnamon, allspice, sour cream, vegetable oil, molasses and water until moistened, scraping sides of bowl frequently. Beat on medium speed 2 minutes until well blended. Stir in chocolate chips.

Pour into 10-cup Bundt pan prepared with nonstick spray.

Bake 50 minutes, or until cake pulls away from sides of pan and springs back when touched lightly. Cool in pan 15 minutes. Invert cake onto wire rack. Cool completely.

Peppermint Bars

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Servings: 36

Brownies:
1 family-size package fudge brownie mix

Peppermint Filling:
5 cups confectioners' sugar
14 tablespoons butter, melted
2 tablespoons heavy cream
1 teaspoon McCormick Pure Peppermint Extract
1/8 teaspoon McCormick Food Color & Egg Dye, Red

Chocolate Glaze:
12 ounces semi-sweet baking chocolate, coarsely chopped
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter crushed peppermint candies (optional)

To make Brownies: Heat oven to 350 F. Prepare brownie mix according to package instructions. Spread on greased, foil-lined, 15-by-10-by-1-inch baking pan.

Bake 15 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out almost clean. Cool in pan on wire rack.

To make Peppermint Filling: In large bowl, using electric mixer on medium speed, beat confectioners' sugar, melted butter, cream, peppermint extract and food coloring until well blended and smooth. Spread evenly over cooled brownies. Refrigerate 30 minutes.

To make Chocolate Glaze: In large, microwavable bowl, microwave chocolate and butter on high 2 minutes, until butter is melted. Stir until chocolate is completely melted. Spread over top of chilled brownies. Sprinkle with crushed peppermint candies, if desired. Cut into bars.



Peanut Butter Snickerdoodle Tart with Cinnamon Peanut Crust

Peanut Butter Snickerdoodle Tart with Cinnamon Peanut Crust

Prep time: 30 minutes
Cook time: 8 minutes
Servings: 8

- 1 1/2 cups lightly salted roasted peanuts, lightly crushed
- 3 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon McCormick Ground Cinnamon, divided
- 3 tablespoons chocolate milk
- 4 ounces semi-sweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 2 tablespoons sweetened condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon McCormick Pure Vanilla Extract
- 1/2 cup heavy cream

Heat oven to 350 F. In medium bowl, mix peanuts, sugar, butter and 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon. Remove 1/4 cup and spread on small baking sheet. Divide remaining peanut mixture among four (4-inch) tart pans with removable bottoms. Press firmly onto bottom and sides of each pan.

Bake tart crusts and peanut mixture together 8 minutes. Cool on wire racks.

In medium microwavable bowl, microwave chocolate milk on high 45 seconds. Add chocolate; stir until completely melted and smooth. Set aside.

In large bowl, using electric mixer on medium speed, beat peanut butter, sweetened condensed milk, vanilla and remaining cinnamon until smooth. Add heavy cream; beat until soft peaks form. Spread in prepared tart crusts. Spread chocolate mixture over top.

Refrigerate at least 1 hour, or until ready to serve. Cut each tart in half. Sprinkle with toasted peanut crumble.



Peppermint Bars

Peppermint Crunch Popcorn

Prep time: 10 minutes
Servings: 16

- 6 cups plain popped popcorn
- 1 bag (12 ounces) candy-coated chocolate pieces
- 12 ounces white baking chocolate, chopped
- 1 teaspoon McCormick Pure Peppermint Extract
- 1 tablespoon red and green sprinkles

In large bowl, mix popcorn and candy-coated pieces. Line large, shallow baking pan with wax paper. Set aside.

Melt white chocolate according to package instructions. Stir in peppermint extract. Pour over popcorn mixture. Toss to coat evenly. Spread in single layer on prepared pan. Sprinkle evenly with red and green sprinkles.

Let chocolate cool and harden completely. Gently break into clusters. Package in cellophane bags with ribbons for holiday gifting.



Peppermint Crunch Popcorn



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