



# INLAND STREAM

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## Traditions

by John VanDerWalker

At the start of the film, Fiddler on the Roof, Tevye asks the hypothetical question “How do we keep our balance?” He is of course talking about being Jew in Tzarist Russian in the age of revolution. The song “Tradition” is one of my favorites from a musical full of really good songs.



This issue of the Inland Stream’s theme is “Traditions.” It is no secret that keeping one’s balance the past few years has been tricky. How do we center ourselves so that we do not tip over? What things keep us from going off track and losing our way? What is it that keeps us from becoming morally and spiritually dead? Traditions remind us of who we are, and for members of Community of Christ along with millions of others, they remind us of who we are in Christ.

Traditions are like a sea anchor, something that keeps us pointed in the right directions, a drag if you will, that minimizes the danger of stormy seas swamping the boat and overcoming the sailors. During the second holiday season of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and what seems to be the millionth year of political polarization it is safe to say that we are sailing in rough seas and our sea anchors need to be deployed.

The congregation I came of age in was pastored by my grandfather, Fred Koch. Grandpa was raised Lutheran, and kept many of the traditions of his youth alive in his family and in the congregation that he shepherded. The family tradition was that on Christmas day at Grandma’s table Grandpa would read the birth story of Jesus, in King James English. I recall that for me, hearing the Christmas story in that unfamiliar language moved me to know just exactly where I was and later, who I was. When I hear Linus read the same story in the same language in “A Charlie Brown Christmas” I am similarly moved. The words and the season come together in a seamless fabric of knowing that I am in the midst of a Holy time. I recall the sense of honor and humility I experienced when I was asked to read the story for our family. The tradition continues.

Another tradition Grandpa insisted on was a gift for the children when the Christmas program was completed. Grandpa was a rural man and grew up in rural (read poor) circumstances in Nebraska in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In those days, if there was fruit in Nebraska it was from somewhere else and usually in a can. However, during the winter, just about Christmas, orange globes would arrive at the market, a sure sign of the season. Long before every Fred Meyer across the nation had stocked various varieties and types of fresh fruit in every season and in copious volumes, rural markets across the US

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## “What Shall I Give Him”

By Tyler Marz, Latter-day Seeker Expansion Minister

Growing up my family had a recipe for a special cake. We received this recipe from my father’s mother who made it for their six children during the holidays and for special occasions. It is heady with nutmeg and reminiscent of eggnog (though there isn’t a single drop). It was a family favorite. My family began making it during the Christmas season. Occasionally neighbors would stop by for a visit, and we would give them a taste of this very special cake that was a rather unique recipe. There was not a single person that didn’t enjoy it. We decided, while other families were giving holiday treats to fellow neighbors, this would be our treat to share.

And so began our tradition of baking 15 cakes a year for all the neighbors that lived up the canyon I grew up in, in Washington State. Everyone would look forward to getting this cake, lightly dusted with powdered sugar on top, reminiscent of fallen snow. It was the tradition of giving, the joy, and kindness that struck me most as we delivered each cake. I am reminded of the Christmas hymn and poem “In the Bleak Midwinter”. It asks, in the final verse, “What shall I give him, poor as I am?” Of course, this hymn is pointing at what we give him, Jesus, but what we give Jesus is what we do for our community and world we live in. Jesus isn’t concerned that our family gave a cake, but that we were generous in a thoughtful way. It fostered genuine connection, love, and care for those around us.

The verse continues:

What can I give him,  
Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd,  
I would give a lamb;  
If I were a wise man,  
I would do my part;  
But what can I give him:  
Give him my heart.



I have continued this tradition and added to it; gifting homemade jams, preserves, and pickles that I make during the summer months. I love gifting something that was made with love and given in love. Regardless of what I give, it is my hope, in this one example of giving that people see my genuine care and love for them found deep in my heart, just as Jesus would.

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### Christmas Traditions by JoAnn Fisher

I love to decorate my home each year for Christmas. It is a tradition that brings a sense of joy and anticipation to my heart.

This year has taught me that this tradition/ritual has become a spiritual practice for me. In November, I was diagnosed with two autoimmune diseases that have compromised my liver and while I was waiting for diagnostic testing and a prognosis, I decided to be fully present with the hope of the season.

Each ornament flooded my mind with memories of holidays past. Making familiar recipes reminded me of all the people who have blessed my table. The fires in the fireplace and cozy socks affirm that I am warm and comfortable even with snowflakes softly falling in the woods where I live.

Life can be unpredictable...even scary. But there is comfort to be found in traditions. You can find yourself in the context of the familiar. And when you do, Hope, Joy, Love and Peace can abide in you.



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would receive and in turn sell oranges around Christmas time. Oranges were exotic and were a reminder of sunny days and caused rural folks to dream of exotic places like Florida and California where oranges were grown. In turn, families and Christian congregations would offer, as a Christmas treat, an orange to children. Many times, the orange was accompanied by some nuts and hard candy in a small paper bag, and that is exactly what Grandpa would, as pastor, hand to all of the children who attended the Christmas program held at our congregation. I recall with great fondness the receipt of this little bag of treats. I was not caused to think of the sunny south, we had oranges and orange juice in my home regularly, rather I was reminded of a world I did not know and had not experienced. A world of extravagant generosity in the midst of poverty, and I remembered that I was loved by a community of people that I call my own. The small bag of nuts in the shell, pieces of candy and an orange helped me center myself in season, in my community, and in the world. I knew who and where I was, and I remembered which tribe I was from.

This tradition continued after Grandpa was no longer pastor, performed by other faithful leaders who knew that it wasn't Christmas in the Buhl Community of Christ (or Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) if there wasn't a gift of an orange, candy and nuts for the children.

In the film Fiddler on the Roof toward the end of the song "Traditions" Tevye asks another hypothetical question "Where do these traditions come from you ask?" and then responds to his own question with "I will tell you." And after a long pause, "I don't know." It is not important for us to fully know the entire history or circumstance of a tradition for us to feel its weight and meaning. The tradition has meaning because it is practiced. However it is helpful for us to reflect on those who have passed traditions on to us. Grandpa passed a lot of things on to me. A sense of the worth of good work and good play were a couple of things. Those were morals and they have become part of the fiber of my life that I add to the tapestry of my family and my community.

During this Christmas season it is my hope that as you participate in the traditions of your family and, hopefully of your congregation in person, you find you place in the crazy time and place and in that finding you understand what is most important and that it is in Christ that we find our true and complete purpose.

Happy Holidays.

**Inland West Mission Center  
2022 Calendar**

- **MC Worship Zoom: Last Sunday of the month**
- **Men's Coffee time: Saturdays - 9:00 a.m. Pacific / 10:00 am Mountain**
- **Women's Gathering: 1st and 3rd Saturdays - 10:00 a.m. Pacific / 10:00 a.m. Mountain**
- **Unity Reunion: June 24 - 29, Living Water Campground, Challis, ID**
- **Samish Reunion: July 2 - 7, Bow, WA**
- **Red Cliffe Reunion: July 9 - 14, Huntsville, UT**
- **Spectacular, Independence/Graceland: July 20 - 30**
- **Mission Center Conference: September 24 - 25, Spokane Valley, WA**

**At this time in person activities are being planned for Summer 2022. This is subject to change depending on Covid health concerns. We will keep you posted if there are changes.**



## Salt Lake City LOVES Advent

By Carla Long

The Salt Lake Community of Christ congregation LOVES Advent. We simply LOVE it! And maybe one of the reasons we love it so much is that we always have people in our congregation who are new to it. There are always one or two families (or more!) who don't know the meaning of Advent and who have never celebrated it before. So, we do it up big!

We start with the sanctuary that is kind of plain, and then every week, we build and build and build it up until by the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday, it is awash with color and life and a festive atmosphere! Over the four weeks, we also build the same song up from one verse to four verses, we build a story from a little into a lot, and sometimes build an entire nativity from bottom to top. It is a wonderful tradition.

For me, though, it's not just about the building—the building of the tangible things and also the excitement, it's a yearning that is building. It's a yearning that born out of a desire that we truly can be the world that Jesus came to show us. It's a yearning that we can be a welcoming place for everyone. It's a yearning that we can find time to fight injustice for our marginalized people. It's a yearning that no one feels alone or separated. It's a yearning for peace--true shalom.

If I'm totally honest with myself, I think that the way a lot of us celebrate Christmas gets in the way of what Jesus came to do. We get a little hyped up over the glitz and the sparkles of Christmas and maybe even think that everyone has it the way we do—with hot meals, warm mittened hands, and presents on Christmas morning. That is simply not true. There are many who go without on Christmas, many who go without throughout the year, and that is not the world in which Jesus would have us to live.

So, let's not wait until after Christmas for the real work of Christmas to begin. Let's feed people now—feed their bodies, their hearts, and their minds. Let's work for people now—stopping injustice, saying no to abuse, and by truly seeing who they are. Don't let Christmas get in the way of the real work of Christmas, the real work of Jesus.

### Christmas Bells by Sandy Decker

There is a tradition in our family that started many years before I met my husband, Kevin. His father started a brass bell collection for each of his children. Every year his father would give a small brass bell to each of the four Decker children. These bells would be carefully taken out of their boxes and displayed in a variety of ways each Christmas. He continued to give each a bell even after they were grown and had moved away from home. Just think about how many bells that was! Kevin took his bells with him and proudly displays them in our home. They always remind him of his father. When our first child was born, we wanted to continue this tradition. So, each year Kevin would carefully take out his bells and add the new one from his father and give bells to our boys. Once they were old enough, they would take out their own bells, ringing each bell as they carefully displayed them adding the new one they had received that year. At first, they were displayed on a small wooden Christmas tree with pegs that Grandpa had made, one for each boy. When they had too many bells for the trees, they were displayed on a felt-covered board with rows of nails. Kevin received his last bell the year his father passed away. He was a bit sad that it was his last bell, but our youngest son wisely said "Dad, your collection is now complete". And it turned out the board that had been made years before with the nails already placed, had the last nail filled with that last bell. Our boys have now both moved away but they continue to receive a new bell every year. At this point they are still displayed in our home each Christmas. Some day they will take their bells to their own homes and hopefully will remember their grandfather and father and feel the love that went into choosing and giving those bells each year. It just wouldn't be Christmas at our home without these bells on display. They are a family tradition that in a small way brings comfort and joy in an ever-changing world.



## Christmas Traditions

“Joy to the world the Lord has come, Let Earth receive Her King. Let every heart, prepare Him room, and Heaven and Nature sing.” Imagine what it would be like to hear all of Heaven and all of Nature sing at the birth of the Christ! I have always loved Christmas music: all the Jingle Bells, Deck the Halls, Here Comes Santa Claus, but especially the hymns of Christmas. These songs can even brighten a stormy day in January.

Christmas traditions that earn a special place in my soul are singing Christmas music, preparing Christmas boxes and baskets for needy members in our community, and preparing a Christmas program for church. If we truly want to celebrate the Christ, we must tangibly carry The Message of his birth into our communities to celebrate with Joy. In the Hagerman community, all the churches along with the fire department, work together to collect and distribute food and gifts for the needy. We begin with a planning meeting that would melt the heart of a weary soul as community members from varied backgrounds and beliefs, come together with singleness of purpose. Individuals gladly volunteer for weighty tasks that will lead up to the final distribution. We are more than rewarded for our efforts when we see the tears of recipients, or hear a child say, “Look, Mom, now we don’t have to eat just macaroni and cheese.” As our eyes are opened through this experience, new opportunities to be Christ’s hands and feet are made evident.

As small children, we memorized poems to recite, and songs to sing for a Christmas program at church. Our parents, with limited funds, made sure we had new church clothes for the occasion to emphasize its importance. It is life changing to experience the story of Christ in a way that will keep the message echoing in our minds and souls. When a teenager, our youth group prepared Christmas drama presentations. We passed on the tradition of going all out for Christmas programs to our children’s generation with musical plays retelling the birth of Christ. Favorite songs and phrases still ring in our ears to remind us to make a place in our hearts and mind this busy time of year for celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. “Spectarama Jingleicious, tinsel ribbon ‘istmas. The things we do this time of year to take the place of Christmas. It’s a fact the birthday of the King has somehow missed us” Spectarama Jingleicious, tinsel ribbon ‘istmas.”

God is Love. We affirm that gift of love through the telling, retelling, and living out the wonderful story of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we, in our simple ways attempt to live out that Love in our communities, people are offered Hope. We see new Joy in the faces and reactions of individuals touched with this Spirit of Love. Let us sing out the songs of Christmas passionately to let this sacred story echo into coming generations, “Joy to the world the Lord has come, Let Earth receive Her King!”

Robin Windes, Hagerman Community of Christ



Project Zion Podcast features a variety of guests and panelists, It explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts the Restoration tradition offers today’s world. Project Zion publishes full-length episodes every Tuesday, with occasional “extra shots” of shorter, high impact content in between. Check it out at <http://www.projectzionpodcast.org/>.

## Mission Center Invitation Support By JoAnn Fisher

In 2021, Invitation Support Ministry continued to focused on four areas of ministry. These ministries exist to provide emotional support, spiritual support, the deepening of relationships, and an opportunity for leadership development.

**Community Elevated** continues as an online ministry for young adults who reside in or are connected to the Inland West Mission Center. Community Elevated is welcoming and open. They usually meet once a month and share in relationships, conversation, worship, and the sacrament of Communion. The average attendance is 6-8 young adults...but due to the pandemic as well as Zoom fatigue they have seen a decline in attendance but are anxious to grow.

**Visiting Ministry** Obviously, due to Covid 19, we have been unable to travel and meet in our buildings as usual. However, have been able to connect through Zoom to a variety of different worship opportunities. We look forward to continuing this vital ministry when restrictions are lifted, and a monthly Zoom Mission Center Worship Service will be incorporated into the visiting ministry schedule.

**Kid's Book Club** over a year ago a children's book club was started by Karin Peter and JoAnn Fisher. We share via Zoom, with children aged 5-8. The 30-minute meeting includes, a story focused on justice, peace, kindness, ecology, socio-economic differences, and inclusion. It is followed up with a peace practice that provides the children skills for coping with frustration, loneliness, awareness of their feelings and the feelings of others. The book club averages 6-8 in attendance and has touched the lives of over 20 kids. We meet on Thursday afternoons and cross 3 times zones. For more information, please contact Karin Peter or JoAnn Fisher.

**House Church** continues in three locations but is a struggle due to the pandemic. We are looking forward to being able to meet again in person. There is definite interest and relationships continue.

**Coffee and conversations** with the guys continue as a Saturday morning Zoom gathering of men that is led by John VanDerWalker. It is meets at 7:30 a.m. Pacific time and 8:30 a.m. Mountain time. If you are interested in attending, see John VanDerWalker or Sandy Decker for Zoom information.

**Women's Zoom gathering** is held twice a month on the first and third Saturdays. It takes place from 10:00 a.m. Pacific time and 11:00 a.m. Mountain time. During this time, we share in a spiritual practice and have conversation with guiding questions. All interested women are invited to join. Contact Sandy Decker or JoAnn Fisher for Zoom information.

**Listening Tour** This began in June and was completed mid-September. This was an opportunity for the MC Staff to meet in person with each congregation individually. It was designed to encourage honest and open communication as well as re-establishing relationships. It has proven helpful as we consider what the needs and wishes of the Inland West Mission Center are and will be in the future.

## Inland West Mission Center Blog

Have you check out the Inland West Mission Center Blog. A testimony is posted each month that reflects how God's love is working in people lives. You should check out these inspiring and heart-felt contributions at: <https://cofchrist-inlandwest.blogspot.com>.

## HeraldHouse.org Menu, Offerings Upgraded

A new *HeraldHouse.org* megamenu and product collections mean visitors to the site will find many of Community of Christ's resources with fewer clicks.

Visitors can continue to use the powerful search bar or quick links at the bottom of the home page. More updates are coming, including a way to see several pages of a book's PDF before downloading.

Printed books and PDFs for *Year C 2021-2022 Worship Resources* and *Sermon and Class Helps* are now available. You can order them now on [HeraldHouse.org](http://HeraldHouse.org).

For those who access the online worship-planning tools, the Advent/December, January, February, and March materials are available now. Beginning this year, the free version will be posted on the Herald House site. This change is part of a larger plan for Community of Christ's digital environment.

Each Sunday will have a link to the *Worship Resources which includes Sermon and Class Helps and Sacred Space*—small-group suggestions that can be opened in Word or in your browser.

You can access these materials in several ways:

- Visit [HeraldHouse.org](http://HeraldHouse.org)
  - Click "Church Life > Worship Resources" in the new menu. Then choose the Month Worship Planning Tools product.
  - Scroll down the home page to the Worship Planning section and click the orange button to access the materials.
  - Use the "Worship Resources" link in the footer at the bottom of any page.
- Visit [CofChrist.org](http://CofChrist.org)
  - Scroll to the blue footer at the bottom of any page and click "Worship Resources" under Quick Links

## From Around the Mission Center in 2021

### **Blessings:**

- Everleigh Reap, Deer Lodge, MT

### **Baptism/Confirmations:**

- Alaia Bengoechea, Hagerman, ID
- Mendi Bengoechea, Hagerman ID
- Ashley DuBois, Hagerman, ID
- Mason DuBois, Hagerman, ID
- Corbin Miller, Hagerman, ID
- Tia Miller, Hagerman, ID
- Kasen Windes, Hagerman, ID

### **Ordinations:**

- Leslie Dalton, Elder, Salt Lake City, UT
- Tyler Marz, Elder, Utah Mission Ministries
- Lavera Wade, Elder, Spokane Valley, WA

### **Marriage**

- Christian Ayala, Hagerman, ID
- Ellen (Studebaker) Hinshaw to Eric Hinshaw, Missoula, MT

### **Deaths:**

- Eddy Ang, Spokane Valley, WA
- Patricia Beck, Deer Lodge, MT
- Rex Boozma, Richland, WA

- Corie Castle, Sagle, ID (December 2020)
- Peggy Christiansen (December 2020)
- Marj Donahe, Spokane Valley, WA (November 2020)
- Cleona Duty, Spokane Valley, WA
- Bob Evans, Spokane Valley, WA
- Johnny Gilbert, Lewis-Clark, WA
- Winifred Jackson, Walla Walla, WA
- Donna Lewis, Spokane Valley, WA
- Pattie Paine, Hagerman, ID
- Madeleine Perdue, Spokane Valley, WA
- Carl Roy, Lewis-Clark, WA
- Stephen Shaw, New Plymouth
- Stephen Toney, Spokane Valley, WA
- Patricia Truitt, Boise, ID (November 2020)
- Sanford Twitchell, Coeur d'Alene, ID
- Mike Victorino, Sagle, ID
- Lila Wallace, Coeur d'Alene, ID
- Shirley Wiggins, Billings, MT
- Leslie Wood, Spokane Valley, WA

If there are life events or transitions happening in your congregation please send them to Sandy Decker at [sdecker@cofchrist-iwest.org](mailto:sdecker@cofchrist-iwest.org).

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