

DECEMBER *everything*



"I WILL HONOUR CHRISTMAS IN MY HEART, AND TRY TO KEEP IT ALL THE YEAR."

-CHARLES DICKENS, A CHRISTMAS CAROL



Ah, Christmas. The lights. The music. The traditions. The bustle. The gatherings. The Reason for the season. The world is an enchanted snow globe for those lucky enough to have a White Christmas. The rest of us will watch the movie and dream of what it would be like to wake up to a dazzling white blanket on December 25. The cold days, the dark evenings, and the bare trees may tempt us to curl up indoors all month but there are many treasures to be found in nature if we'll just bundle up and get outdoors. The promise of cocoa upon return can be a great motivator to children and mom, as well. The Christmas season can easily become a whirlwind of activity if we aren't intentional about creating an atmosphere of peace, hope, love, and joy. The practice of Advent is a wonderful buffer against the "noise, noise, noise" that the season can bring. Light candles. Sing songs.

Meditate on the coming of the King.

Remember, a handful of traditions make more of an impact than a long list to get through and it's okay to let go of the traditions that you and your family have outgrown. I hope you enjoy these rhythms and that they help you to focus on the beauty, joy, anticipation, and peace of the season.

Merry Christmas,
Cindy Rinna

*Some suggestions contain affiliate links.





MEDITATE

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

- *Isaiah 9:6*

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."

- *Matthew 1:21*

"Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David."

- *Luke 2:11*

READ

These are a few of our absolute favorites.
A complete book list for the season is at the end of your guide.

Picture Books

The First Christmas Night by Keith Christopher

Great Joy by Kate DiCamillo

The Nutcracker by ETA Hoffman (Illustrated by Don Daily)

Snowmen at Christmas by Alison Jacks

Song of the Stars by Sally Lloyd-Jones

Good King Wenceslas by John M. Neale

The Spirit of Christmas by Nancy Tillman

Family Read Alouds

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott (specifically, Book 1)

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

Diane Goode's American Christmas by Diane Goode

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever by Barbara Robinson

For Mom

Waiting on the Word by Malcolm Guite

Keeping Christmas by Allison Pittman

Hallelujah by Cindy Rollins

The Man Who Invented Christmas by Les Standiford



LISTEN

[Rinna Family Christmas Favorites](#)
[Rinna Family Christmas Favorites \(Instrumental\)](#)
[Amazon's Christmas Classics](#)
[Spotify's Christmas Classics](#)

SING

When we're learning a new song I like to sing along to multiple versions. The variety helps us hear different parts of the song and keeps it from getting redundant.

["Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee"](#) and [this version](#)
["I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In"](#) and [this version](#)

ADMIRE

[Norman Rockwell Christmas paintings](#)

WATCH

A live performance such as a live nativity, Handel's Messiah, The Nutcracker, or a seasonal play or music show

[*A Christmas Carol* \(2009\)](#), [*The Muppet Christmas Carol*](#), [*Mickey's Christmas Carol*](#)
[*The Man Who Invented Christmas*](#)

[*It's a Wonderful Life*](#)

[*White Christmas*](#)

[*8-bit Christmas*](#)

[*The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*](#)

[*Elf*](#)

[*The Polar Express*](#)

[*Arthur Christmas*](#)

[*Home Alone*](#)

[*Christmas with the Kranks*](#)

[*Dr. Suess' How the Grinch Stole Christmas*](#), [*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*](#)

[*Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*](#), [*Frosty the Snowman*](#)

[*A Charlie Brown Christmas*](#)

[*Miracle on 34th Street* \(1947 and 1994\)](#)

[*Veggie Tales: St. Nicholas*](#)

[*Why Do We Call it Christmas?*](#)

[*Meet Me in St. Louis*](#)

[*Little Women* \(2019\)](#)



COOK

Chicken Pot Pie Soup

MAKE

A countdown paper chain

An Advent Wreath

FRESHEN

Buy potted poinsettias or amaryllis but be sure to keep them away from pets.
Red roses with cuttings of holly do, too.

FRAGRANCE

"Christmas Day" by Antique Candle Co.

"Fireside Spruce" by Hearth & Hand™

RHYTHM

Participate in Advent. We love this resource from Tsh Oxenreider.

NATURE HUNT

an evergreen tree
a 5:00 sunset
a frosted windowpane

OUTING

Go for a walk in the dark around your neighborhood and admire the Christmas lights. Check your area for walk or drive through light shows. We like to get in pjs, grab cocoa and our pets, and visit our Botanical garden.
Get a little group together and go caroling in your neighborhood or at a nearby nursing home.

PREPARE

Spend some time thinking about what you want Christmas to look, smell, sound, feel, and taste like in your home. Which traditions do you hope to pass down? What do you want your children to remember when they look back?



POETRY & TEA

The Menu

Snowball cookies & Hot Cocoa

Poems to Read

"A Visit from St. Nicholas" by Clement C. Moore

"Christmas Bells" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

"Here We Come A-Caroling" by Anonymous

"Cradle Hymn" by Martin Luther

"King John's Christmas" by A.A. Milne

Luke 2:8-20 (Tidings of Great Joy).

A Visit from St. Nicholas

by Clement C. Moore

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds;
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,
When what to my wondering eyes did appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny rein-deer,
With a little old driver so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment he must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!"



To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"
As leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;
So up to the housetop the coursers they flew
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too—
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a pedler just opening his pack.
His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly
That shook when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight—
“Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!”



Christmas Bells

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."



Here We Come A-Caroling
by Anonymous

Here we come a-caroling
Among the leaves so green;
Here we come a-wand'ring
So fair to be seen.

Love and joy come to you
And a joyful Christmas, too;
And God bless you and send
You a Happy New Year—
And God send you a Happy New Year.

We are not daily beggars
That beg from door to door;
But we are neighbors' children
That you have seen before.

Love and joy come to you
And a joyful Christmas, too;
And God bless you and send
You a Happy New Year—
And God send you a Happy New Year.

God bless the master of the house
Likewise the mistress, too;
And all the little children
That round the table go.

Love and joy come to you
And a joyful Christmas, too;
And God bless you and send
You a Happy New Year—
And God send you a Happy New Year.



Cradle Hymn
by Martin Luther

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay—
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

King John's Christmas
by A.A. Milne

King John was not a good man --
He had his little ways.
And sometimes no one spoke to him
For days and days and days.
And men who came across him,
When walking in the town,
Gave him a supercilious stare,
Or passed with noses in the air --
And bad King John stood dumbly there,
Blushing beneath his crown.
King John was not a good man,
And no good friends had he.
He stayed in every afternoon...
But no one came to tea.
And, round about December,
The cards upon his shelf
Which wished him lots of Christmas cheer,
And fortune in the coming year,
Were never from his near and dear,
But only from himself.
King John was not a good man,
Yet had his hopes and fears.
They'd given him no present now
For years and years and years.



But every year at Christmas,
While minstrels stood about,
Collecting tribute from the young
For all the songs they might have sung,
He stole away upstairs and hung
A hopeful stocking out.
King John was not a good man,
He lived his life aloof;
Alone he thought a message out
While climbing up the roof.
He wrote it down and propped it
Against the chimney stack:
"TO ALL AND SUNDRY - NEAR AND FAR -
F. Christmas in particular."
And signed it not "Johannes R."
But very humbly, "Jack."
"I want some crackers,
And I want some candy;
I think a box of chocolates
Would come in handy;
I don't mind oranges,
I do like nuts!
And I SHOULD like a pocket-knife
That really cuts.
And, oh! Father Christmas, if you love me at all,
Bring me a big, red, india-rubber ball!"
King John was not a good man --
He wrote this message out,
And gat him to this room again,
Descending by the spout.
And all that night he lay there,
A prey to hopes and fears.
"I think that's him a-coming now!"
(Anxiety bedewed his brow.)
"He'll bring one present, anyhow --
The first I had for years."
"Forget about the crackers,
And forget the candy;
I'm sure a box of chocolates
Would never come in handy;



I don't like oranges,
I don't want nuts,
And I HAVE got a pocket-knife
That almost cuts.
But, oh! Father Christmas, if you love me at all,
Bring me a big, red, india-rubber ball!"
King John was not a good man,
Next morning when the sun
Rose up to tell a waiting world
That Christmas had begun,
And people seized their stockings,
And opened them with glee,
And crackers, toys and games appeared,
And lips with sticky sweets were smeared,
King John said grimly: "As I feared,
Nothing again for me!"
"I did want crackers,
And I did want candy;
I know a box of chocolates
Would come in handy;
I do love oranges,
I did want nuts!
And, oh! if Father Christmas, had loved me at all,
He would have brought a big, red,
india-rubber ball!"
King John stood by the window,
And frowned to see below
The happy bands of boys and girls
All playing in the snow.
A while he stood there watching,
And envying them all ...
When through the window big and red
There hurtled by his royal head,
And bounced and fell upon the bed,
An india-rubber ball!
AND, OH, FATHER CHRISTMAS,
MY BLESSINGS ON YOU FALL
FOR BRINGING HIM
A BIG, RED,
INDIA-RUBBER
BALL!



Tidings of Great Joy

Luke 2:8-20

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field,
keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them,
and the glory of the Lord shone round about them:
and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold,
I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,
which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you;
Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes,
lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude
of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men. And it came to pass,
as the angels were gone away from them into heaven,
the shepherds said one to another,
Let us now go even unto Bethlehem,
and see this thing which is come to pass,
which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph,
and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it,
they made known abroad the saying
which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things
which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and
praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen,
as it was told unto them.



BOOKLIST FOR THE WELL-READ CHILD: CHRISTMAS READS

CHRISTMAS

Pre-School

Picture Books

Gingerbread Christmas by Jan Brett

Christmas in the Barn by Margaret Wise Brown

Dream Snow by Eric Carle

The First Christmas Night by Keith Christopher

Snowmen at Christmas by Alison Jacks

Song of the Stars by Sally Lloyd-Jones

The Little Drummer Boy by Ezra Jack Keats

The Night Before Christmas by Clement C. Moore, illustrated by Scott Gustafson

The Spirit of Christmas by Nancy Tillman

Christmas in the Big Woods by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Mortimer's Christmas Manger by Karma Wilson

Bear Stays Up by Karma Wilson

Advent

My First Read and Learn Countdown to Christmas by Dr. Mary Manz Simon

1st Year+

Picture Books

The Twelve Days of Christmas Illustrated by Jan Brett

Who's That Knocking on Christmas Eve? by Jan Brett

The Little Fir Tree by Margaret Wise Brown

The Snow Speaks by Nancy White Carlstrom

The Money We'll Save by Brock Cole

The Nutcracker by ETA Hoffman (Illustrated by Don Daily)

Merry Christmas, Strega Nona by Tomie dePaola

Great Joy by Kate DiCamillo

The Baker's Dozen: A Colonial American Tale Retold by Heather Forest

A World of Cookies for Santa by M.E. Furman

The Story of Holly & Ivy by Rumer Godden
The Christmas Cat by Efner Tudor Holmes
The Christmas Eve Tree by Delia Huddy
Christmas in Noisy Village by Astrid Lindgren
Good King Wenceslas by John M. Neale
The Best Christmas Pageant Ever by Barbara Robinson, illustrated by Laura Cornell
The Twelve Days of Christmas by Gennady Spirin
The Legend of the Candy Cane by Lori Walburg
The Christmas Boot by Lisa Wheeler
Christmas Stories: A Little House Chapter Book by Laura Ingalls Wilder
Fear Not, Joseph! A Story of Christmas by Julie Stiegemeier

Audio

The Nutcracker by Tchaikovsky featuring Storyteller Jim Weiss (Maestro Classics)
A Christmas Carol and Other Favorites by Jim Weiss
Letters from Father Christmas by J.R.R. Tolkien, narrated by Derek Jacobi

Treasuries & Chapter Books

The Family Under the Bridge by Nancy Savage Carlson
A Child's Christmas Treasury compiled by Mark Daniel
Diane Goode's American Christmas by Diane Goode
Michael Hauge's Family Christmas Treasury by Michael Hauge
The Best Christmas Pageant Ever by Barbara Robinson
Letters from Father Christmas by J.R.R. Tolkien
Take Joy!: The Tasha Tudor Christmas Book by Tasha Tudor

Advent

The Wonder of the Greatest Gift by Ann Voskamp

4th Year+

Chapter Books

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott (specifically, Book 1)
A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens (Illustrated by Roberto Innocenti)

Audio

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, narrated by Jim Dale

Advent

Shadow & Light by Tsh Oxenreider
Hallelujah: Cultivating Advent Traditions with Handel's Messiah by Cindy Rollins
Unwrapping the Greatest Gift: A Family Celebration of Christmas by Ann Voskamp

