



FAITH

OUR VISION STATEMENT

United with Christ, we are committed to sharing the transformative love of God's grace and peace through service to our neighbors.



December



10:15 a.m.—WORSHIP

Sunday School is held during a portion of church.

Watch us on [YouTube](#)

LEAD PASTOR: Rev. Dr. Bruce C. Stevenson
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC/ORGANIST: Dennis J. Duda

Faith United Church of Christ

5992 Route 378

Center Valley, PA 18034

610-282-3939

faithchurchcv@gmail.com

www.faithchurchucc.org

We are an Open & Affirming Congregation



*No matter who you are or where you are on
life's journey you are welcome here.*

*We are a people
who have come together
through a common faith,
a common love,
and a common covenant
with the triune God;
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
and together we endeavor
to be a community of
worship,
education,
mission,
fellowship,
and stewardship.*

2023—2024 Consistory

President—Tom Hovis, Vice President—Bruce Torrence

Secretary- Joan Hassler

Elders

Kim Ritter

Melissa Shafer

Tom Hovis

Joan Hassler

Donna Schudel-Barone

Bruce Torrence

Church Treasurer: Deb Herstine

Liaisons:

Worship & Music—Joan Hassler

Christian Ed—Donna Schudel Barone

Fundraising—Tom Hovis

Budget & Finance—Bruce Torrence

Memorial & Enduring Gifts—Bruce Torrence

Property—Tom Hovis

Mission—Kim Ritter

Justice—Melissa Shafer



A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends,

In a previous article I told you how my new (to me, that is) car has many safety features that are new to me and are a bit surprising. For example, if I get too close the edge of the road an alarm rings, the steering wheel vibrates, and the words “Lane departure. Steering required” appears on my dashboard. I’m pretty sure I told you all about this. I think the alarm, the vibrating steering wheel, and the words “Land Departure” on the dash are helpful and wise but do I really need to be told that I must steer the car? I keep hearing about driverless cars in our future, but I don’t think we’re there yet.

Anyway, I recently received a new and somewhat surprising message on my dashboard. I’m developing quite a relationship with this car! A few weeks ago, I was driving home from a 3-day seminar in Rockville, MD. I was heading east on I-78 about an hour west of Allentown. I stopped at a rest stop to stretch my legs and treat myself to a soda and a bag of chips and then I continued on the last leg of my journey home.

It wasn’t long before I got that new message. Across the dash were the words: ***Driver Fatigued. Take a break!*** appeared along with the picture of a cup of coffee.

So, here are my questions:

1. Why does my car think I’m fatigued after I just had a break?
2. How can my car ***think*** anything?
3. Even if I was fatigued, how could my car tell? Can it measure my pulse through the steering wheel? Count the number of times I

blink my eyes through the rear-view mirror?

4. Why is my car offering me a cup of coffee? If my car is *that* smart it should know that I drink *tea*, not coffee! When I walk into any Starbucks in the Lehigh Valley all the baristas know to make me a Chai Latte, skim, no water, no foam, extra hot please!

While I don't know how my car knows how to take such good care of me or how to watch over me, I'm glad that it can and does. I know that there are engineers, designers, service managers, and mechanics who know how all this works but to me it is a mystery.

There are times when faith is a mystery to us. We are told to believe things that don't make any sense. Take the Trinity for example. How can God be three (Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer) and yet one? Take the Incarnation, something that we are about to celebrate this month, as another example. How can Jesus be fully divine and fully human? These things, and many others, are a mystery to us.

Mystery is often hard to embrace as truth and yet it is essential to live a life of faith. At its core mystery is about trust. Do we trust God or not? It's as simple as that. A friend of mine who struggles with faith in God once said to me: "Bruce, you have to admit that it is hard to believe in all of this." My response was: "I suppose it is, but it becomes easier when you can embrace mystery and rely on trust."

I don't know how my car can tell that I'm fatigued and suggested that I take a break but I'm glad it can. I don't know how God can be three yet one but I know that I need someone to create, redeem, and sustain so I am glad this is true and I don't know how God could leave the heavenly realm and dwell with us as Jesus because I need a savior.

I don't know how it happens, I'm just glad that it does. I'm perfectly comfortable with mystery.

Peace,



**Come, Celebrate the Advent Season with
Choirs, Brass and Special Musical Guests**

Sunday, December 24

10:15 Worship

and

Christian Education Christmas Program

Christmas Eve Services

4:00 pm

Brass, Carols, Candles, and Communion
The services will conclude with the traditional
Candlelight Ceremony.

Sunday, December 31

No Sunday School / Worship @ 10:15 am



Music at Faith

The season of thanksgiving and celebration is upon us! In the coming weeks you never know what you'll experience in worship. A variety of brass quintets, soloists and guest musicians including music for harp, flute, trumpet, piano and organ will abound. And anthems by the Faith Singers will enhance our worship experience. We hope you will make every effort to join in and share the celebration of this special season. See you at Faith Church!

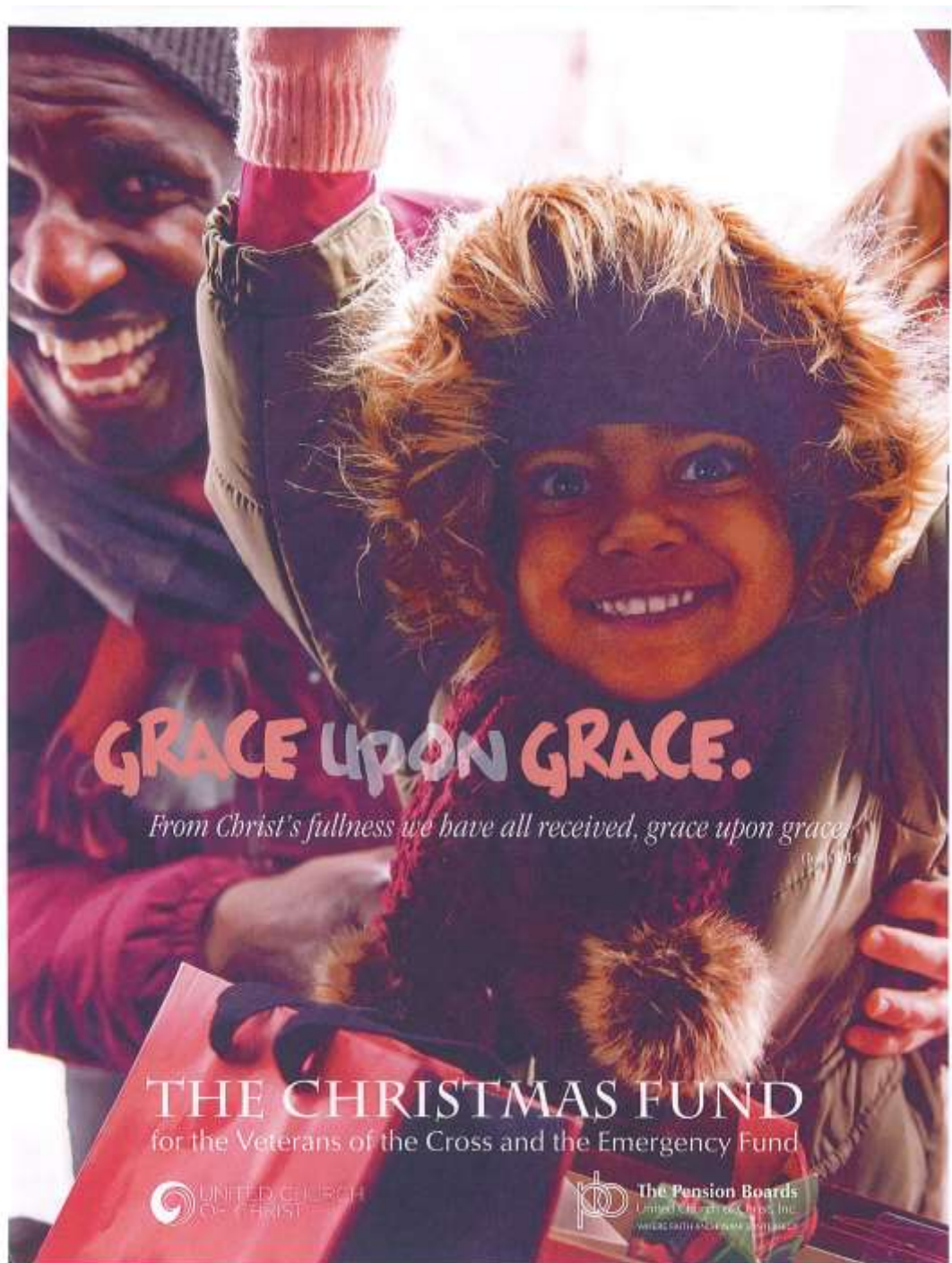


During Advent, which begins this year on December 3, many churches and families use wreaths to symbolize watchfulness and increasing joy as Christmas approaches. Colors for the candles vary, with some traditions using blue (for hope or creation) and others preferring purple (for royalty, humility or penitence).

The four candles that each represent a week in Advent also signify hope, peace, joy and love. (The third candle is often pink.) In the center is the white Christ candle, representing Jesus as the light of the world. That candle is lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

The round, green Advent wreath has special meaning of its own. It symbolizes eternal life and the unending love of God, who sent his only Son to earth to die in our place.

Our UCC Special Offering for December is THE CHRISTMAS FUND



Read more on the next page
and/or click [HERE](#) to learn more
on the UCC Christmas Fund webpage.

Designated envelopes will be available in the narthex.



THE CHRISTMAS FUND: "GRACE UPON GRACE"

"From Christ's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

John 1:16

Grace is truly at the center of everything for us humans. Grace shapes our faith, our family, our friendships, and our identity. Grace is not just being given the benefit of the doubt, or God bestowing favor on the less than worthy. Grace is also the root of gratitude and thankfulness. It is at the heart of our thanksgiving/eucharistic meal. "Grace upon grace" is a reminder of the great gifts of God to us, and an expression of our grateful response to that fullness.

Your gifts to the Christmas Fund allow the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance to provide grace, hope, and joy through financial relief to UCC pastors, lay church leaders, and their families. Thanks to you, no request goes unfulfilled. Your graceful response to the Christmas Fund appeal ensures the flow of loving support will not be interrupted.

In 2022, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 218 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,042,726)
- Health benefits supplementation for 86 retired clergy and lay employees (\$181,389)
- Emergency grants for 55 individuals and families (\$138,022)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 479 retired clergy and lay employees (\$278,500)

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

Give online at www.christmasfund.org.

Hello Karen!

I want to thank you for the \$500 donation from Faith's Mission Team. We had our Oktoberfest event on Friday evening and raised \$10,380 for the Pitt Hopkins Research Foundation. There were 5 families who came who had children with Pitt Hopkins: Rylie, Emma, Renna, Ben, and Anthony. We had over 100 people in attendance. I added Faith UCC as one of the "tabletop sponsors" to our event. Although it's difficult to get there, we appreciate all of the love and support from the people at church. Everyone has always been very good to our family. I've included some pictures in this email.

With appreciation,
Heather Maginn



I'd like to take a moment to thank everyone at Faith Church who continue to send cards or visit with Rylie. It is so thoughtful! Each time a card comes in the mail, I share it with her. She especially liked this one...it had puffins on the front.

With love,
Heather and Jack Maginn



TREX RECYCLING- GOOD NEWS

As of November 27, 2023 our goal of collecting **500 pounds of soft plastic has been reached!** All donated plastic has been dropped off at Giant. The bench has been ordered and will soon be on its way to Faith Church. Thank you for helping us make our goal so quickly.

After December 3 we will no longer be collecting anymore plastic. If you bring in plastic on that day we will drop it off at Giant for you. After that date we are asking that you continue to recycle your plastic bags at the drop-off boxes at Giant. Or better yet...**use reusable bags each and every time you go shopping.** Let us continue to do our part to keep our environment clean and beautiful!

REDUCE

REUSE

RECYCLE

Gift Cards Needed for BLP Children and Seniors

For the last few years we have collected money to purchase gift cards for the families who receive supplemental food from the pantry. Last year we received enough donations to give every child and senior a \$50 gift card and everyone else a \$25 gift card.

There are 3 ways that you are able to make a donation:

- ~Make a check out to **Faith UCC Mission** clearly marked for BLP Gift Cards.
- ~Use **PayPal** to donate through **bettylouspantry.com**.
- ~Write a **check** with **2023 Christmas** on the memo line and send to:
Betty Lou's Pantry
PO Box 85
Coopersburg, PA 18036

The last date to make a donation is December 11.

Thank you for your previous donations and blessings to all.

JEWELRY FUNDRAISER

Faith's Jewelry Fundraiser will continue until December 17.

Here is some information that might be helpful in making your decision about donating or not.



~**Ann Fillman is a Jewelry Fundraising Specialist.** She also evaluates antiques and entire estates. She lives locally in the Blue Church area.

~When she receives jewelry from the fundraiser she recycles what she can, sells some to jewelry makers, or donates to places like Dress for Success. She will then donate a portion to our church. She guarantees that Faith Church will receive \$200 for their efforts.

~Chestnut Hill UCC and Emmaus Public Library have both done very well with this jewelry fundraiser.

~You **DO NOT** have to include your name with your donation.

~These are the items that she will accept:

Fine or Unwanted
Old & Broken Watches
Costume Jewelry

Jewelry Broken Jewelry
Single Earrings
Cuff Links

~ Place your items in a bag or box and drop in the collection box located in the Narthex. Just lift the lid and drop it in.

Thank you for making this a successful fundraiser for Faith Church.

FORGET-ME-NOTS



Thank you for staying in touch with Faith Church members who can no longer attend worship on a regular basis. They greatly appreciate the cards and the kindness shown to them. Each Forget-Me-Not has a Guardian Angel who stays in touch with them throughout the year but it's important that we all take the time to drop a line or make a phone call.

Reminder to Guardian Angels: This is the time of year when we must remember each Forget-Me-Not in a special way. Please check in with them or family members to see if there is a special need at this time. Thank you.

HATS & SCARVES



Faith Stitchers have certainly outdone themselves this year with the creation of over 200 beautiful hats and scarves. Most of which will be donated to The Caring Place in Allentown. Along with these wonderful winter items the Mission Team will be donating 3 dozen insulated, waterproof gloves for the students at TCP. Many hats and scarves will be on display during worship on a Sunday in December.

HOLIDAY HOPE CHESTS

Thank you for returning all 50 of your beautifully packed shoe boxes right on time! We can see that a lot of thought, time and love went into the items that went into the HHC. They will be delivered to the Lehigh Valley Volunteer Center on Friday, December 1st. Merry Christmas to All!

Mark Your Calendars:

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING:

Beginning in mid-January we will begin our Souper Bowl of Caring collection. Keep your eyes open for hearty/chunky soup sales so that we can restock the Pantry with soups that will help keep the families warm on a cold, winter day. This collection will be followed by our annual Soup Cook-off.

SPRING BINGO:

The date for this event has been changed to Sunday, April 14.

The Mission Team wishes to thank you for supporting our many missions throughout the fall.

TREX Plastic	School Supplies for TCP	
Hygiene Kits	Holiday Hope Chests	Samaritan Fund
Betty Lou's Pantry Most Needed Items		

Your donations are greatly appreciated by all those who benefit from your generosity.

We wish you many blessings and much happiness during
the Christmas Season!

Puzzle Answers:
eyes, salvation, nations, light, Gentiles, glory, Israel

DECEMBER VOLUNTEERS

Head Usher & Financial Secretary: Tom Hovis

Date	Ushers	Lay Reader	Advent Wreath	Flowers
12/03	Bob and Patti Shelly George Rau, Mike Ford	Rose Mirth	Elaine Trexler Jean Hanville	A Friend
12/10	Michele Keeler Kim Ritter	Barb Maursky	Rose Mirth Barb Maursky	Roberts
12/17	Donna Schudel-Barone Faye Tirpak	Rose Mirth	O'Donnell Family	Poinsettias
12/24	Donna Schoenberger Cindy Talaber	Children	Children	Poinsettias
12/24 4:00	Tim & Sara Hovis Cindy Talaber Brenda Hovis	Cindy Talaber	Stevenson Family	Poinsettias
12/31	Joan Hassler Diane Neidermeier	tbd	na	Poinsettias

FAITH FINANCIALS



October	Month	YTD
Receipts	\$21,662.07	\$187,040.71
Disbursements	\$20,813.73	\$207,330.30
	\$843.34	(\$20,289.59)

Special Offerings:
 Neighbors in Need—\$125
 OCWM—\$20
 Samaritan Fund—\$770



Many thanks for your continued generous support of Betty Lou's Pantry! Our donations for the last three Sundays of October and the first two Sundays of November included 354 items.

ITEMS CURRENTLY NEEDED:

**CANNED TUNA
KNORR'S OR RICE-A-RONI
JELLY (NOT GRAPE)**

Items stocked at the Pantry include:

Pork & Beans	Chili
Spaghetti Sauce	Canned Pasta
Peanut Butter	Canned Tomatoes & Canned Sauce
Kidney Beans	Chunky Soups
Canned Fruit	Macaroni & Cheese
Beef Stew	Canned Chicken and Salmon
Dry Pasta & Spaghetti	Meat Helpers (Beef, Chicken, Tuna)
Pasta Side Dishes (Rice-A-Roni, Knorr's Rice)	

Monetary donations are a particularly effective way to help the Pantry. A donation of \$10 will buy over 60 lbs of food through Second Harvest. If you are in need or know of someone in the area who is, please call [610-282-2838](tel:610-282-2838) and leave a message, or email bettylouspantry18036@gmail.com —Mike Ford



Celebrate the Light

Bursting through December nights
that could be long and cold,
our Christmas lights bring warmth and joy
with colors soft or bold.

Cascading from the rooftops,
and from trees both small and tall,
the lights cry out, "We have good news!
We want to shout to all.

"You've seen the darkness earth can hold,
the sorrow, war and fear;
but God has sent his Son for all,
to show his Love is here.

"The darkness can't put out God's Light.
Christ's with us day by day,
illuminating paths so we
can follow in his way."

Light homes and streets and candles.
Make your world shine clear and bright.
God's love surrounds and blesses us.
Come, celebrate God's Light!

~ Peggy Ferrell



DECEMBER BIBLE READINGS

December 1

Isa. 24:14–23
1 Peter 3:13–4:6
Matt. 20:17–28

December 2

Micah 7:11–20
1 Peter 4:7–19
Matt. 20:29–34

December 3

Amos 1:1–5, 13–2:8
1 Thess. 5:1–11
Luke 21:5–19

December 4

Amos 2:6–16
2 Peter 1:1–11
Matt. 21:1–11

December 5

Amos 3:1–11
2 Peter 1:12–21
Matt. 21:12–22

December 6

Amos 3:12–4:5
2 Peter 3:1–10
Matt. 21:23–32

December 7

Amos 4:6–13
2 Peter 3:11–18
Matt. 21:33–46

December 8

Amos 5:1–17
Jude 1–16
Matt. 22:1–14

December 9

Amos 5:18–27
Jude 17–25
Matt. 22:15–22

December 10

Amos 6:1–14
2 Thess. 1:5–12
Luke 1:57–68

December 11

Amos 7:1–9
Rev. 1:1–8
Matt. 22:23–33

December 12

Amos 7:10–17
Rev. 1:9–16
Matt. 22:34–46

December 13

Amos 8:1–14
Rev. 1:17–2:7
Matt. 23:1–12

December 14

Amos 9:1–10
Rev. 2:8–17
Matt. 23:13–26

December 15

Hag. 1:1–15
Rev. 2:18–29
Matt. 23:27–39

December 16

Hag. 2:1–9
Rev. 3:1–6
Matt. 24:1–14

December 17

Amos 9:11–15
2 Thess. 2:1–3, 13–17
John 5:30–47

December 18

Gen. 3:8–15
Rev. 12:1–10
John 3:16–21

December 19

Zeph. 3:14–20
Titus 1:1–16
Luke 1:1–25

December 20

1 Sam. 2:1b–10
Titus 2:1–10
Luke 1:26–36

December 21

2 Sam. 7:1–17
Titus 2:11–3:8a
Luke 1:39–48a (48b–56)

December 22
2 Sam. 7:18–29
Gal. 3:1–14
Luke 1:57–66

December 23
Jer. 31:10–14
Gal. 3:15–22
Luke 1:67–80
or Matt. 1:1–17

December 24
Isa. 60:1–6
Gal. 3:23–4:7
Matt. 1:18–25

December 25
Mic. 4:1–5;
5:2–4
1 John 4:7–16
John 3:31–36

December 26
2 Chr. 24:17–22
Acts 6:1–7
Acts 7:59–8:8

December 27
Prov. 8:22–30
1 John 5:1–12
John 13:20–35

December 28
Isa. 49:13–23
Isa. 54:1–13
Matt. 18:1–14

December 29
2 Sam. 23:13–
17b
2 John 1–13
John 2:1–11

December 30
89:19–52
1 Kgs. 17:17–24
3 John 1–15
John 4:46–54

December 31
1 Sam. 1:1–2,
7b–28
Col. 1:9–20
Luke 2:22–40



LIGHT-UP BOX

Christmas lights remind us that Jesus shines in the darkness. Here's a fun way to play with holiday lights.

What you need:

- A strand of Christmas lights
- A large clear plastic container and lid
- Green tissue paper
- Colorful beads



What you do:

1. Plug in the lights and place them in the container.
2. Put on the lid. (If the lid isn't transparent, flip the box over.)
3. Play with your light box, using these ideas as starters:
 - Cut tissue paper into triangles and arrange them in a tree shape. Decorate the tree with colorful beads.
 - Use the light box for tracing. Place a picture on it, with a clean sheet of paper on top. Then trace the drawing.
 - Use magnet tiles to build designs atop the light box. Try building a 3-D Christmas tree!



December Birthdays

01 Wes Koser

18 Cody Schaffer

02 Dennis Frantz

20 Ellie Kane

03 Carol Bouc

22 Shirley Baldwin

04 Anna Breisch

22 Jordan Koch

04 Angela Lender

23 Adalynn Freitas

04 Nicole Ryan

24 Donald Koch

11 Christine Leh

27 Mike Ford

11 Allison Grammer

30 Ray Foulke

12 Sherry Meluskey

12 Dana Zsido

14 Faye Tirpak

14 Bonnie Stenroos

15 John Lenner

16 Harvey Weidner

16 Sis Scholl



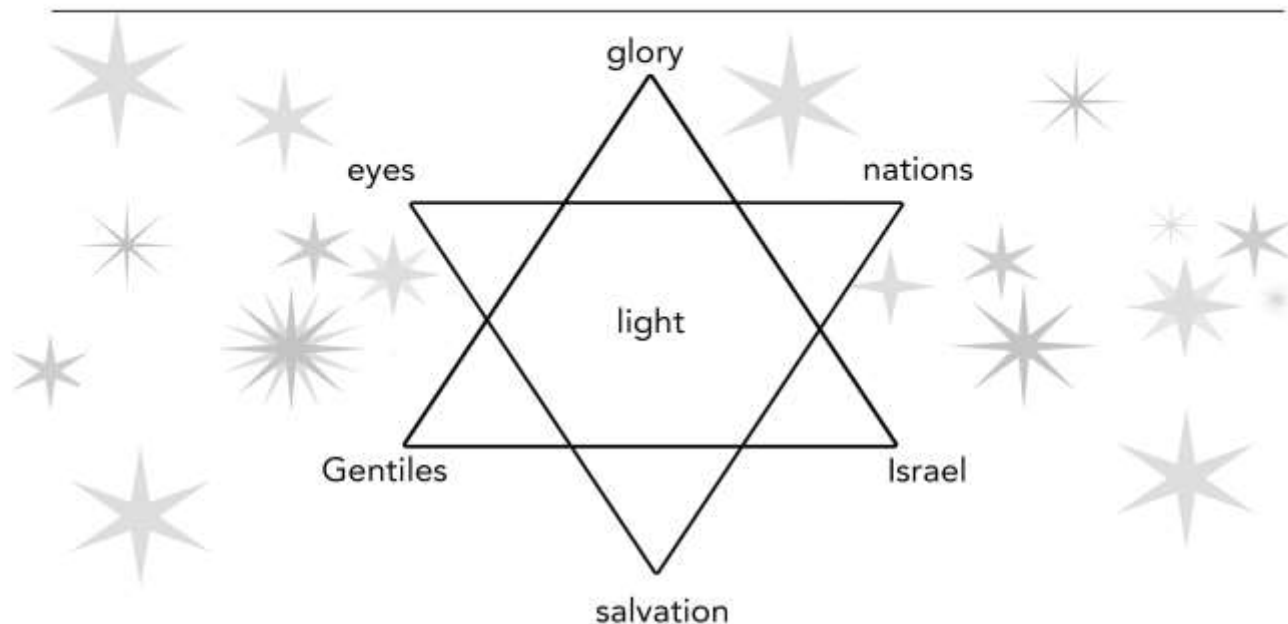
Please contact with corrections or omissions to the list.



SIMEON'S SIGHT

When Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the temple,
they heard a special prophecy from Simeon.

*Directions: Using the star key, write the words in
the correct spaces to complete Luke 2:30-32, NIV.*



"For my _____ have seen your _____, which you have prepared
in the sight of all _____: a _____ for revelation to the
_____, and the _____ of your people _____."

Luke 2:30-32, NIV