

# Pastor Anne's Message, January 2025

*Embrace the New Year with Love and Positivity!*

The New Year is upon us! It does not matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome in God's Kingdom. It does not matter what has and has not happened in your life this past year. Here is what we know: On the First Christmas Eve, the angel's announcement of "Good News of Great Joy for all the people!" was and is THE PROMISE that ALL of us are given. **All of us!**

This amazing story in Luke began with the shepherds, but it can only continue with us, you and me. It is your story now, and your family's story, and my story too. And in whatever way it embraces our hearts, our minds, and our emotions, it will always be THE story that is simply amazing!

The Christmas Story, this incredible story of "God With Us," does not end with the birth of Jesus that night in Bethlehem. This is when and where it begins! It is not just "a story to tell," rather, it is a story to live!

Jesus' manger has never been emptied of its power and its meaning and it never will be. It is the place where God's life and our life meet and intersect. (Let's remember that a manger is a feeding trough. It is the place where our lives are fed, sustained, and re-created in the midst of our life's circumstances, come what may!)

Life is given to us moment by moment. Each day holds the promise of things to come and the potential to do something you love, something you believe in. It is an opportunity to be brave and to live with your whole heart, and to become "your best you." We know that the Holy Spirit gifts each one of us with talents, fruits of the spirit and minds for learning and being. This is your special and wonderful life. It is the greatest gift you will ever receive.

You are loved by God, and the "exceedingly great joy," is shared in the manger and touches all the community of relationships you build, nurture, and enjoy.

You are remarkable and sharing your life is a gift of the Christmas Story. So, why not make the most of every moment? God wants us to remember and embrace that we were born for wonder and awe. We are here to marvel at the beauty of this world and to experience the joy of being alive in Christ.

Stay curious, have adventures, make room for what you live and give in this beautiful world. Discover the wonder of God's world and all the miraculous treasures for us, and the treasure of eternal life as well.

May God bless you in the New Year 2025! Hold fast to family and believe in yourself, for our God is an awesome God!

With hope, love, and faith,

Pastor Anne



*Baby Jaylee Shiflet places the Baby Jesus in the nativity manger with help from big sister, Scotlyn, and Mom and Dad.*

*Christmas Eve The Cox, Murphy, Rienks, and Shiflet families*

THE MUSTARD SEED  
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
COLLBRAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
PO BOX 160  
COLLBRAN, CO 81624

**Annual Congregational Meeting**  
**Sunday, January 26**  
**Potluck Lunch 11:00, Dining Hall**  
**Meeting 12:00, Sanctuary**

## JANUARY 2025

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Advent 2 *The Stewards*



Advent 1 *The Weirich Family*



Advent 3 *Robert Bouton and Virginia Klute*



Advent 4 *Jeannie Reeves and Paula Kracht*

## After Christmas Devotional

Source: The Upper Room Daily Devotional, submitted by Alana C. Broyles of Virginia

Psalm 97:6 The heavens proclaim the Lord's righteousness, and all peoples see his glory.

As the time to take down Christmas decorations drew near, I felt that familiar sadness in my heart. The celebration of Christmas comes and goes so quickly. As I began to remove the pieces of my Nativity set, each piece spoke to my heart and prompted me to pray: Lord, help me to be like a shepherd – to lead, nurture, and guide those around me to the Good Shepherd. Lord, help me to be like the wise men- to hear your call and to use the gifts that you have blessed me with to serve others. Lord, help me to be more like Joseph and Mary – to rely on you completely and trust you throughout each day. Lord, help me to be more like Jesus – to show love, kindness, understanding, and forgiveness.

Praying with my Nativity set in this way helped to ease my post-Christmas sadness and gave me a sense of hope and excitement for the new year and what it would bring. We can look forward with hope when we walk hand in hand with our Lord and Savior.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may the glory and wonder of the Nativity lead us through all seasons of the year. Amen.