# 2026 Holiday guide

*Stories | Books | Recipes | Gifts*

# *Ready or not, here come* **The Holidays!**



BY JJ PETERS

Time moves fast.

It seems like just yesterday we were sweating through the brutal summer heat, enjoying long days and wondering when cooler weather would arrive.

Now, the holiday season is upon us, bringing thoughts of snow, Christmas lights and family gatherings. The changing weather means it's time to bring out the coats, hats and maybe even gloves.

With Christmas approaching, it's time to get ready for everything the season brings, including all the holiday events in the area. Between shopping, decorating and making plans with family, those remaining weeks can fill up quickly.

As preparations begin, don't forget the Christmas tree, decorations, gifts for your loved ones, stocking stuffers and more. Getting an early start can leave more time to enjoy the celebrations instead of rushing to finish everything at the last minute.

One of the best parts of the holidays is the Christmas cheer. That spirit begins to show as decorations come out, lights brighten the evenings and homes and businesses take on a festive look.

There are also the community celebrations, such as Small Business Saturday in Riverside, Christmas in Kalona, Lone Tree Winterfest, Wellman Light the Night and Santa's visits to area towns. Keep an eye on local announcements so you can add your favorite activities to the calendar.

Beyond the preparations and festivities, the holidays offer a time to reflect and celebrate with loved ones. Whether gathered around a fire or visiting in a living room, families have a chance to reconnect. For some, it may be their only opportunity to get together all year.

Those gatherings don't have to be complicated. Sharing a meal, playing a game or looking through old photographs can give everyone something to enjoy. Sometimes, the moments that require the least planning become the ones people remember most.

If this holiday season is as cold as last year's, we could be in for a long winter. But the celebrations give us something else to concentrate on for a while, such as what to get little Johnny for Christmas.

Do you have something picked out for your children, grandchildren, nephews or nieces? There's still time, but organizing your list now can help you avoid a last-minute rush. Set a budget, write down ideas and keep track of what you've already purchased.

Make a list, check it twice and remind the kids that Santa will be doing the same. A thoughtful gift doesn't have to be expensive, and something homemade can carry plenty of meaning.

Another thing the holidays bring is laughter. Sitting beside the fire with a cup of hot chocolate offers a chance to catch up, share stories and reminisce about the good old days.

Amid the busy schedules, leave a little room to slow down. Enjoy the decorations, take a drive to see Christmas lights or spend an evening watching a favorite holiday movie.

We'll see what this year brings, but let's get ready for a holiday season filled with warmth, laughter and moments we'll remember for years to come.


**3C Starting Small**
Kindred owner Linsey Gerot shares the successes and challenges of running a small business

**4C The Choice**
Short fiction story by Tom Gingerich, illustrated by Craig Shellady

**8C Special Holiday Traditions**
Read about Thanksgiving and Christmas traditions from Taylor Bontrager

**10C Fables to inspire the mind**
Moriah Delp pairs fables with biblical lessons in her first book

**12C Holiday Recipes**
Find a variety of holiday recipes from Debra Persons and Eileen Beran

**16C Christmas Concerts in Buggy Land**
A short story by Mary Lynch Swander

**18C Christmas Shopping in Kalona**
A holiday shopping guide to local businesses. Happy Shopping!

**19C 2026 Christmas in Kalona**
Preview this year's Christmas in Kalona!



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SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# Starting small

*Kindred owner Linsey Gerot shares the successes and challenges of running a small business*

BY JJ PETERS

Riverside is home to many small businesses, and 2026 brought a surge of new businesses to the city. Among them is Kindred, which opened early this year.

Linsey Gerot opened Kindred in February, combining her massage therapy business with a retail store. Along with massages, Kindred offers Iowa-themed apparel, coffee roasted and produced in Cedar Rapids, body oils, lotions, soaps, candles and men's products such as soaps, lotion and cologne.

Gerot discussed both the rewards and challenges of running a small business.

"There's so much stuff that goes into owning a small business. It's really rewarding to see people in your store and loving the products that you have."

She said getting customers through the door can be difficult, but once they visit and find something they like, they are hooked.

"It's kind of hard to find the sweet spot of when to be open. Sometimes it's hard to get people in the door. But once they get in, they're excited about having something like that in town."

Gerot explained that she and her husband both run small businesses, so they "kind of own it together." She also handles more of the business side of her husband's construction company.

"My husband owns a construction company. We are both small business owners, we really try to support small businesses in the community."

Being a small business owner also allows her to set her own schedule and balance work with being a mother.

"What's so great again about being a small business owner is it is so flexible. Right now, my kids are really little, and so I stay home with my kids during the day. And then, you know, I go to my business on the evenings and weekends when my husband's home."

She also finds time to "work in these little pockets," fitting business tasks into whatever time she has available.

"I do it during nap time while my kids are napping, or I stay up until midnight and do it. I work on Saturdays and Sundays. You just work in these little pockets of time that you find."

Gerot's passion for supporting small businesses led her to organize a Small Business Saturday event in Riverside on Saturday, Nov. 28, following Thanksgiving.

The event will run from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., with activities and treats for children, including cookie decorating, games, free popcorn, donuts, letters to Santa and pictures with Anna, Elsa and Olaf. Gerot's goal is to bring the community together and encourage people to shop locally instead of at big-box stores or online retailers such as Amazon.

"I wanted to bring more awareness to people in our community, and bring our community together to do something. So I have all the businesses in town that will be open, and then I'll have some pop-up vendors."

Before opening Kindred's retail store, Gerot had worked as a massage therapist for several years. She explained why she decided to expand while continuing that work.

"I've had my massage therapy business for quite a few years, but I just decided to expand into the retail area."

Reflecting on her first year, she said it has involved "a lot of learning owning a retail store."

Gerot described how opening the store has changed her routine compared with running her massage business alone.

"I kind of went from, I just did massages, so I was having my clients come in, and I was there when my clients were there, and then I would leave. But being a retail business owner has been a little bit different because I just kind of sit there and wait for people to come to me, which has been different for me."

She also discussed the products she sells, most of which come from Iowa. Gerot travels around the state to meet the makers and learn about their products.

"When I think of an idea of something I want for the store ... I try to find ... if I can find it somewhere made in Iowa, and then I reach out to the owner ... we kind of work together ... and if they're close enough ... I'll drive there and just meet them in person."

Currently, the store is open Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Gerot is also trying Wednesday evening hours from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

As Kindred approaches its first anniversary, Gerot hopes the store will continue doing well and help make Riverside a great community for small businesses.




SUBMITTED

Gerot stands with the wide range of products that she offers in her store.









FEATURED FICTION

# The Choice

WRITTEN BY TOM GINGERICH
ILLUSTRATED BY CRAIG SHELLADY

No doubt about it. Time was passing with an urgency that it had never before exhibited. Davey Kruger had turned eighty in October, and Samantha, seventy-five a month previous. They had both certainly lost a step or two down through the years. The kids had jobs and families in distant places mostly too far to visit. And lately he had become preoccupied with the routine of what his life had become and with the hateful rhetoric and political worldwide dysfunction. He accepted the reality that he was nearing the end. He was okay with it. He'd had a good run and a good life and his health was acceptable considering his age. He still was fairly mobile as was Samantha and they walked a lot. He watched what he ate-- up to a point that is. He wasn't going to give up everything that was supposed to be bad for him. I mean, "Come on!" he'd told Doc Sattler. "If all the tasty stuff is off limits, why go on?"

And now another Christmas had arrived. It had always been their favorite holiday, but had become a challenge since the kids moved away. They had spent a few of them with daughter Janie in California. She and husband Jake and the two kids had been happy to have them. Son Paul and wife Jackie in Green Bay were likewise. And both families had visited them on occasion, but he and Sam were just not up to travelling much anymore. So for the past few years, despite their age, Christmas day was spent at the local food bank serving meals to the needy. They felt good at the end of the day, sensing they'd done something worthwhile in a world that had lately gone haywire-- had actually made a difference. It was a feeling that the spirit of the Christmas season always seemed to manifest.

So when he and Sam climbed into bed on this latest Christmas Eve, he was looking forward to helping out again the next day and to the good feelings those efforts always evoked. He was unusually tired as he closed his eyes, lulled into a deep sleep by the droning, wavering thrum of the December wind outside, thoughts of his absent children, and of the beautiful old girl lying next to him who he'd spent his life with so happily. His last thought though before sleep overcame him was nostalgic– memories of the magical childhood Christmases of long ago and a passing wish to have things as they once were– to go back and relive those special times.

He opened his eyes– the bygone, familiar room drifting slowly into focus. The ceiling, the walls, the furnishings re-registering in his mind, distant memories accumulating like snowflakes that had deepened across the years-- years that had or hadn't passed. What was happening? His bedroom of long-ago.

Lying there cocooned under the covers, he scanned the place, saw the tall upstairs windows of the old farmhouse of his childhood, the stuff of his youth, the door leading to the hallway. He sat up. There was his desk against the south wall; the dresser and bookcase and rock collection he'd begun on their first family trip to Colorado when he was six. He shifted beneath the covers drawing his knees to his chest and wrapping his arms around his legs, slowly turning his head from side to side taking it all in. What was happening? Not real. Can't be happening. Can't accept it.

Nudging his incredulity out of the way, he addressed the insanity of it all. "No!" he said aloud in the frigidly cold air of his unheated upstairs room. Still in a limbo of disbelief, he tossed back the covers and pivoted from the bed, his bare feet stinging when they touched the icy wooden floor. Continuing to survey his surroundings, he suddenly realized he felt different as well. He stood up. The normal stiffness, aching back and other numerous aches and pains that normally surfaced upon waking each morning were absent. They were gone. He felt like a kid again. He looked down and saw the body of a twelve year old. He was a kid again.

Hurrying to the west-facing window, he looked out at the familiar scenes of his youth– the acreage he'd grown to love as a kid and was sad his folks had sold when he'd grown and moved away. The large turn-of-the-century barn was there stamped against the gray winter sky, as was the machine shed and the shop building just to his right, everything covered in a two-inch blanket of December snow. The windbreak of white pine and oak and maples stretching westward along the north side of the house was there just as he remembered it.

In a panic, he turned and moved cautiously toward the door still in disbelief. Turning the knob, he stepped into the hallway and descended the stairs (the same creaky board on the first step) still remembering all of what now appeared to be his past, The stairway door was open and there were familiar voices drifting through the house with warmth rising up the staircase from the old oil stove clicking in the living room. He recognized the drawling familiar voice of the local newsman drifting from the tabletop radio in the kitchen. It was an everyday ritual that his parents employed at breakfast each morning before heading to work and getting him ready for school.

As he stepped into the living room there was a lightning quick movement to his right as his old dog Rusty launched himself toward him in a frenzy from where he had been sleeping by the stove. It was as if the dog hadn't seen him for years, twisting and turning and jumping in a pandemonium of happiness. Dave knelt down and grabbed him, lovingly roughing him up, rescuing and speaking his name from memory, realizing that somehow the old dog knew something was different. He'd always had a dog while growing up in the country and was always devastated when they'd pass away. They were family after all, always gifting unconditional love.

Everything seemed surreal as he slipped quietly toward the kitchen. He stopped midway there and held up his hands studying them and his bare arms, looking down at his youthful frame and bare feet. Twelve years old, he thought? Impossible… but also absolutely real.

He stood very still then hearing his parents quietly talking about their plans for tomorrow, Christmas day at Gram's in town, and of the week ahead. He prepared himself, and slowly headed for the doorway. Stepping around the corner, he was overcome with emotion as he saw the two people who once had been the most important ones in his life, but who both had been taken from him before he'd turned thirty.

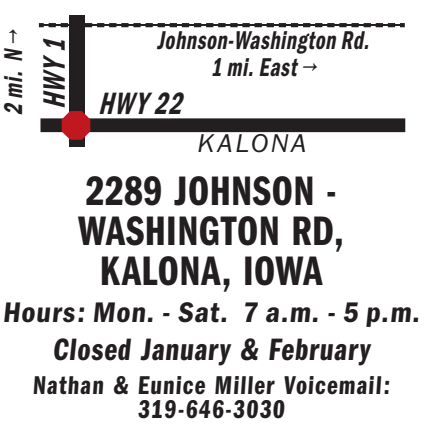
His mother, Jenny, turned toward him as he rounded the corner. "Mornin', Davey," she said, getting up and heading for the stove. "Pancakes today. How

SEE THE CHOICE | PAGE 5C









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## FEATURED FICTION

### THE CHOICE/Continued from Page 4C

many?"

He stood frozen for a moment, then hurried toward her, grabbing her arm and turning her around, pulling her close and burying his head in her shoulder.

"What's this?" she gasped, hugging him back. "What's all this? Have a bad dream?" She glanced over at his father who was trying to work out what was happening.

Suddenly conscious of the awkwardness of the situation Davey quipped, "You know how much I love your pancakes, Ma!" Then he smiled that twelve-year-old smile that they always praised him for, and headed for the table.

James Kruger shrugged his shoulders and just smiled at his wife, returning his attention to yesterday's paper and sipping the last of his morning coffee as Dave walked up behind him, gave his shoulder a squeeze, and then sat down. James exchanged another glance at Jen and returned to his paper.

"So what's the schedule for you today, Davey? You go back on the 3rd, right?" James asked.
Dave thought fast, realizing that it had to seem as if everything was normal and it was just a typical Christmas Eve. "Yeah. Not sure about today though, Dad." He took a sip of orange juice his mom had poured him. "You need any help on the route?"

Both his parents worked at the local post office. His mother, a clerk, and his father, a rural carrier with a fifty-mile-long daily route that was made much more difficult during the long winter months when the snows came. Davey would often ride along while on Christmas break, climbing across the snowbanks left by the plows to deposit the mail in the boxes. He even rode with him from time to time on summer vacation to help him out and to spend time with




him. He loved doing it–helping out his old man.

"Only if you want to. Snow's been light so far, but we're supposed to get some heavy stuff tonight and tomorrow, so the day after will probably be rough. Might need you then."

He was beginning to feel like he was fitting back in, and it felt good and bad at the same time. He remembered his wish and it scared him. He thought of Sam and their life together and the kids and grands and all that he would lose if he somehow couldn't return. But as his father slid back his chair and both parents busied themselves to leave for work, Dave was at a loss as to what to do. What could he do?

After breakfast and with his parents gone for the day, he headed for the living room with Rusty at his heels. His eyes widened as he saw the tree in the corner where it had always been each Christmas ever since he could remember. The lights were on and the tinsel was shimmering in a rainbow of reflected colors. It was beautiful. He sat down crosslegged on the floor, reached out and examined some of the ornaments he recognized that were adorning their tree each year. Sitting there mesmerized in the reality of his return, he recalled the many Christmas Eves of his younger years and the magical moments of falling asleep, or trying to, steeped in the glorious anticipation of what the morning might bring and what wonders might be awaiting him under the tree.

The Santa mystic monopolized his younger self until his teen years, but his parents also schooled him in the real meaning of the holiday, attending Mass each Christmas morning, and when he was older, midnight Mass on some occasions. Each and every year though, after Mass, they always approached the altar and knelt before the Nativity scene spending a few quiet moments taking it all in and marveling at how the small Child in the manger would change the world. From those moments, Davie had formed a relationship with the Kid that would never die. He was a part of him.

And now, having returned to his twelve-year-old self, he recalled that his parents had already taught him the Rule… the Golden one. The one where you always treat others the way you want to be treated. And that was what the Newborn in the manger had in mind all along and what He tried to teach everyone.

While sitting here in his childhood home back in 1959, however, Dave realized people had shelved the Kid's message in 2026… some people that is. But he and Sam and the kids had not. And he also realized that his life wasn't finished yet. Maybe he could

SEE THE CHOICE | PAGE 7C

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## FEATURED FICTION

### THE CHOICE/Continued from Page 5C

still change some minds if he could get back. But of course, somehow, he had to get back. He was suddenly afraid that although he remembered his past life at the moment, he might begin to lose those memories the longer he remained.

He suddenly had a thought, stood up, and hurried upstairs to his room, pulling open the bottom drawer of his dresser. From it, he retrieved a timeworn cigar box and sat down at his desk, opening it gingerly because it contained collected items that had been special to him while growing up. He removed several things– a shiny buckeye from a tree near his school, an arrowhead he'd found while fishing at the English River nearby, and a brightly colored blue-jay feather he'd picked up while on a fall trip with his first grade class. They were all things that he treasured for many reasons. Not valuable, but meaningful to his young self.

Then he saw the stone, smiled, picked it up and ran his fingers along its colorful, glass-like surface. It had meant a lot to him when he first found it on a family hike in Colorado, and he was devastated when he somehow lost it years later. He'd considered it to be a talisman of sorts– a good luck charm he often carried with him. Now here it was again after all the years of wondering what had happened. He clutched it tightly and stuck it in his pocket.

After rummaging through the remaining contents of the box, he replaced everything but the stone and returned it to the drawer.

Another thought surfaced. Whenever he'd had a problem while growing up, there was a tall white pine tree nestled in the grove that he was drawn to. He thought of it as his tree and it had always been a sacred place for him– a place where high in the upper boughs perched on a limb he could focus. He could sit there gazing across the fields into the valley below and could figure out what should be done no matter what the problem. This was one of those times.

He got up and descended the stairs, headed for the back room with Rusty following close behind, grabbed his winter coat from the hall tree in the corner, bundled up, found some gloves in a pocket, sat down to put on his overshoes that were always in the boot rack, exited through the back door and stepped out into the cold morning frost. Walking briskly through the snow, he headed for the tree with Rusty leading the way as always, on the lookout for squirrels and cottontails.

Working his way through the grove, he arrived at the majestic pine, many of the green-needled boughs covered with snow. He began to climb, amazed at the ease with which his twelve-year-old body handled the task. He was extra careful because of the cold and snow. Near the top, he secured a safe vantage point on a sturdy limb with a splendid view of the snowy, rolling fields and the woods and the stream in the valley beyond.

With the cold biting his nose and the north wind in his face he remembered his wish, just a passing thought as he had drifted off to sleep, that miraculously had been granted. He began to wonder why as he sat there perched on the limb high above the snow covered earth.

He thought of the first time he had climbed the tree on a warm summer day at the age of eight when he'd found his favorite kitten had been killed by a neighbor's rogue tomcat. He had buried him in the grove and needed to be alone. He was sobbing as he climbed, but after a half hour of reflection in the shade of the upper branches, he felt better and vowed to be more vigilant and have his Daisy BB gun ready to run off any interloping toms. And suddenly he knew why he had returned, why his wish had been granted. He realized more clearly than ever before that his family was everything to him. It was the only thing that really mattered. Sam, Janie and husband Jake and the kids, and Paul and wife Jackie. They were what mattered the most. He'd always have the healing memories of his parents and his pets and his early life and of all those special Christmases from long ago. That was enough. And he realized it then and there perched high on the limb of his childhood climb. Somehow, Sam and he would find a way to be with the kids more often.

Removing a glove and reaching into his pocket, he retrieved the stone and held it tightly in his hand. He took one last look across his snow-covered childhood past, closed his eyes, kept them closed, and made another wish, a fervent request that somehow he knew would come true.

And with that, the droning of the north wind slowly began to fade and with his eyes still closed, a darkness overtook him as he felt the cold dissipating, slipping away, being replaced with a comforting warmth that enveloped his entire being as his body seemed to break free of earthly constraints. The sense of time, the confines of his body, and all senses ceased to exist for Davey, and he knew no more.

There was a whisper of sound coming from somewhere, nowhere, and everywhere as the darkness began abating and a diffused light filtered in. He opened his eyes, slowly regaining his senses, becoming aware of familiar surroundings, of the softness, and the warmth beneath the covers of their bed. He heard her voice coming from next to him, and felt her hand on his.

"Merry Christmas," she said. "It snowed last night."

Dave turned to face her, reached over and put his other hand on hers.

"Merry Christmas, Sam," he responded smiling.

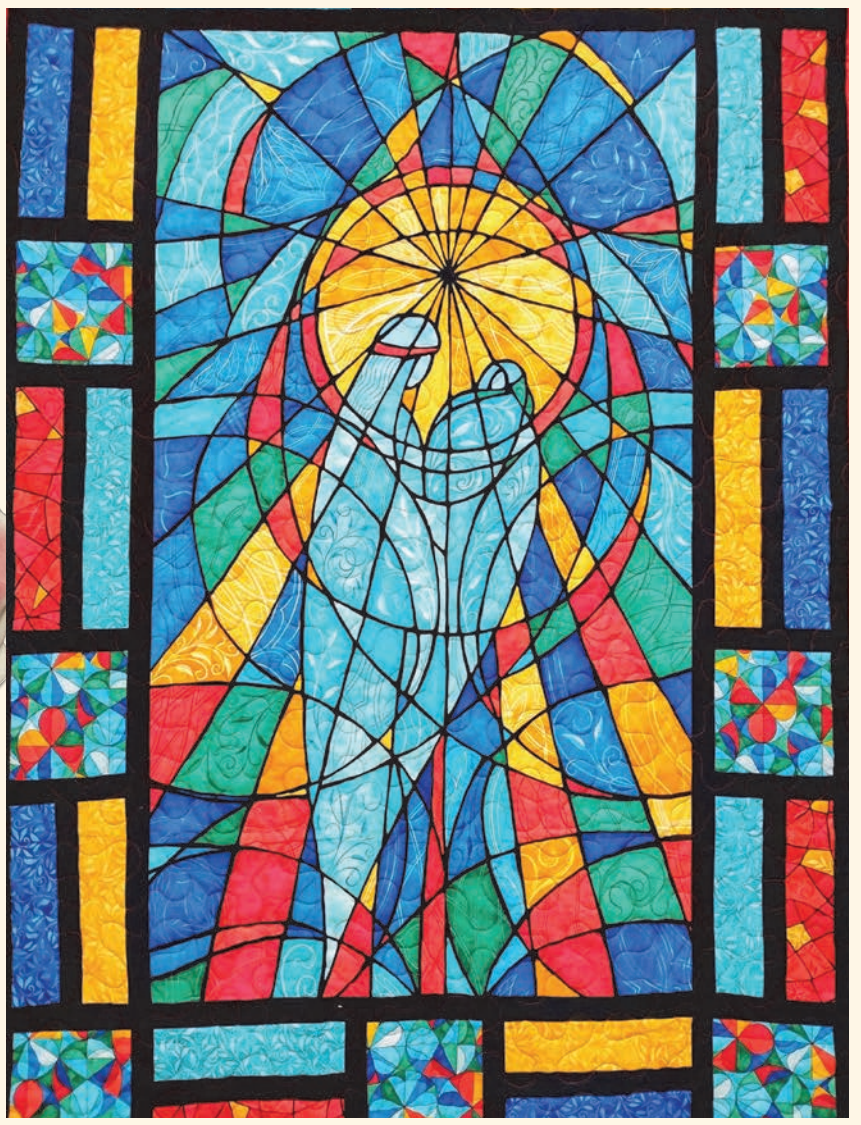
Leaning over, he kissed her on her forehead, squeezed her hand, and sat up, attempting to digest all that had happened and elated about his return.

He tossed back the covers and stood, aches and pains reestablished, but with rational thoughts suddenly overwhelming him, cultivating doubts about his journey, but only momentarily.

For he glanced at the nearby nightstand. The stone was there, its multicolored, glossy surface reflecting the bright light streaming through the bedroom window from the snowy Christmas morning outside.

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## FEATURED HOLIDAY TRADITION

# Our special Thanksgiving & Christmas tradition

BY TAYLOR BONTRAGER

Growing up two miles from my Grandma Salina's house, it was a highlight of the holiday season to gather around her table with family. Usually, my family would spend either Thanksgiving or Christmas at grandma's house with many of the uncles, aunts, and cousins. The day started around noon when we would gather to partake in a delicious holiday spread. There is nothing quite like eating and visiting with family around the table over the holiday season. Grandma's table was no disappointment! Everything she made was amazing, but her pie was at the top of her culinary accomplishments. To this day, I've never tasted pumpkin pie that compares to grandma's pie. After dinner, the adults sat around and told stories while the children played. Many competitive football games took place in grandma's basement. As the afternoon wore on, the snacks and treats started showing up on the table. Though the day always went by too quickly, the memories made have lingered on.

As I ponder those special holiday moments at my grandma's house, I'm reminded what made them so special. It wasn't just the food, football, or fanfare. Most importantly, it was the time spent in the home of a grandma who loved and feared the Lord and left a legacy for the generations to come. Her house was a special place— a home away from home. In the midst of a busy world, grandma's house was a peaceful and quiet oasis. It's as if the world came to a stop on those days spent around her table.

Sadly, our world has monetized the season and minimized the reason. Thanksgiving is not about football, turkey, or black Friday deals; rather, it is about expressing gratitude to the Lord our Creator for His rich blessings in our lives. Ultimately, Christmas is not about gifts, decorations, or pie but about remembering the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth to give His life as the only sufficient sacrifice for the sins of mankind. This holiday season is a time to remember Christ's birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, and imminent return to this earth in glory and power. Centered around this central theme that Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost, we can enjoy the holiday season. This holiday season, as you gather around the table with those you love most, take time to treasure the moment, cherish the memories, and above all remember what Christ has done by giving Him the preeminence that He deserves.

## How they say that in...

**English:** The holidays
**Spanish:** Fiestas
**Italian:** Le festività
**French:** Fêtes de fin d'année
**German:** Feiertage

## GUESS WHO?

I am an actor born in New York on August 26, 1980. I was raised in a small apartment with six siblings, and studied ballet at the School of American Ballet. I starred in many films as a child, notably playing the main character in a popular Christmas movie.

Answer: Macaulay Culkin

## MERRY CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH

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| D | M | G | W | F | E | G | T | T | T | N | G | D | E | C | O | B | O | N | C |
| G | N | B | W | L | S | S | K | F | Y | R | E | N | A | P | E | C | F | I | S |
| A | E | H | I | C | K | U | G | R | I | R | A | M | I | N | U | I | T | N | N |
| R | S | H | W | B | I | O | W | I | L | F | E | V | I | T | N | H | G | I | C |
| L | L | O | S | G | R | S | S | E | V | S | G | N | E | R | E | V | P | D | A |
| A | O | F | C | S | T | A | T | N | V | A | A | D | N | L | R | E | T | G | N |
| N | W | N | A | V | D | B | M | D | I | C | O | C | O | W | W | E | R | F | I |
| D | N | G | I | F | T | S | N | S | G | T | W | G | E | O | N | D | M | G | V |

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

### WORDS

ANGEL
BIRTH
CAROLS
CHRISTMAS
CHURCH
COMPANY
DECEMBER
DINING
EVERGREEN
FRIENDS
GARLAND
GIFTS
GREETING CARD
HOLLY
MAGICAL
MANGER
MERRIMENT
MISTLETOE
REMINISCE
ROAST
STAR
TRAVEL
TREE SKIRT
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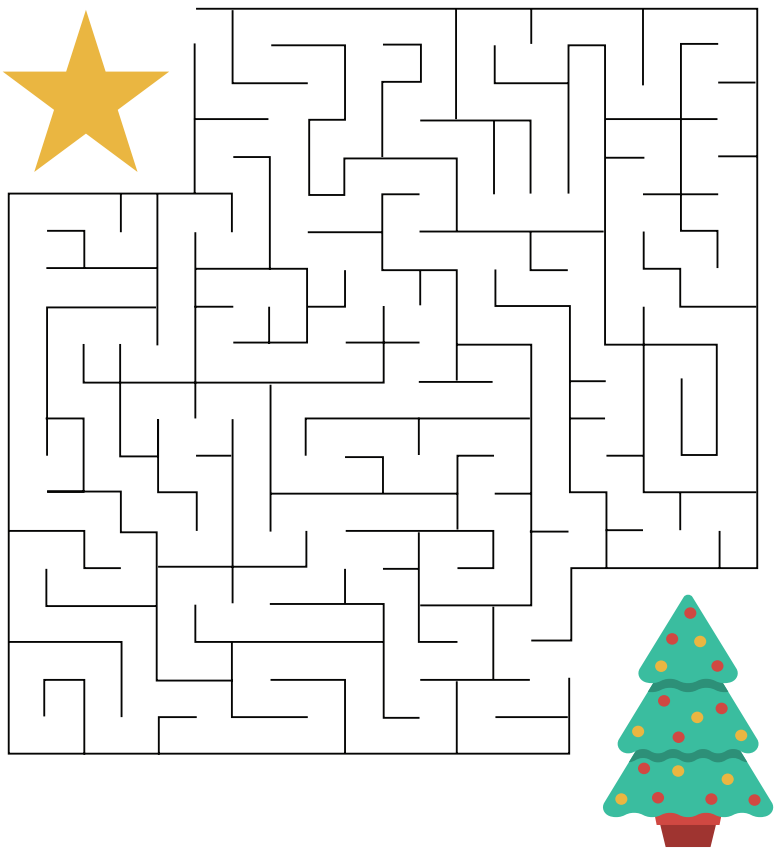
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GOOD THROUGH DECEMBER 2027*

# HOLIDAY MAZE

*Help the star reach the Christmas tree!*



# CRYPTO FUN

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Solve the code to discover words related to Christmas.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
**(Hint: 16 = E)**

**A.** 15 22 5 5 8
*Clue: Happy*

**B.** 23 22 5 20 9 12 8
*Clue: Special occasion*

**C.** 9 16 11 16 18 7 16 26
*Clue: Twelfth month*

**D.** 1 26 16 24 16 19 3 24
*Clue: Gifts*

Answers: A. jolly B. holiday C. December D. presents


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FEATURED BOOK

# Fables to inspire the mind

*Riverside mother and author Moriah Delp draws inspiration from familiar fables, pairing them with biblical lessons in her first book*

BY JJ PETERS

You have probably read or heard familiar fables such as The Tortoise and the Hare, The Lion and the Mouse and The Boy Who Cried Wolf. But you may not have heard them paired with biblical lessons.

Riverside resident Moriah Delp wanted to make that connection. A mother of two and owner of Physical Therapy & Wellness and Harmonized Brain Center of Iowa in Riverside, Delp wrote her first book, Fables, Faith, and Lessons for Life – Volume 1, after she could not find a book that paired traditional fables with Scripture the way she envisioned.

"My hope is to provide families, grandparents, churches, and educators with an engaging resource that encourages children to develop honesty, kindness, perseverance, humility, and other important character qualities while growing in their understanding of God's Word."

We spoke with Delp about her inspiration, writing process and plans for future books.

**What inspired you to write this book about seven famous fables?**

"It started when I was looking for a gift for a friend who was expecting. I wanted to give her a book that paired familiar fables with Scripture. When I couldn't find one that was quite what I had in mind, I decided to make my own."

"I still remember the morals of the fables I grew up hearing, and that got me thinking. If a short story could help me remember a moral all these years later, maybe it could help a child remember a Bible verse, too. As a mom, I wanted to create something families could read together that would help those verses stick and give them a natural way to talk about how to live them out."

**For readers unfamiliar with these fables, how would you explain their connection to biblical lessons?**

"A fable is a short story that lets us see what happens when a character makes a choice. In The Lion and the Mouse, the lion spares a tiny mouse, and later that same mouse frees him from a net. That story gives children a way to understand what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12 about how much we need one another. You can ask a child, 'When has someone helped you in a way you didn't expect?' or 'How have you helped someone in a surprising way?'"

**Many of these fables are well known. How did you approach adapting each one to teach a biblical lesson?**

"I started with the part of each story people remember (the moral) and asked what it could help a child understand. In The Ant and the Grasshopper, for example, the ant gathers food while it's available. That fits naturally with the passage in Proverbs that invites us to watch how the ant works and prepares. This was one of the first fables that I added to the collection as finding the scripture pair was easier. I wanted the Scripture to connect with something children could already see happening in the story."

**How did you get started, and what was your process for putting the book together?**

"I began by choosing seven familiar fables that each offered a different lesson in character. Then I worked through the stories one at a time, pairing each with Scripture and writing a short moral. As I put the pages together, I went back and forth between the wording, the illustrations, and the layout. Sometimes seeing a page as a whole helped me realize a line could be shorter or that a detail in the illustration needed to be clearer."

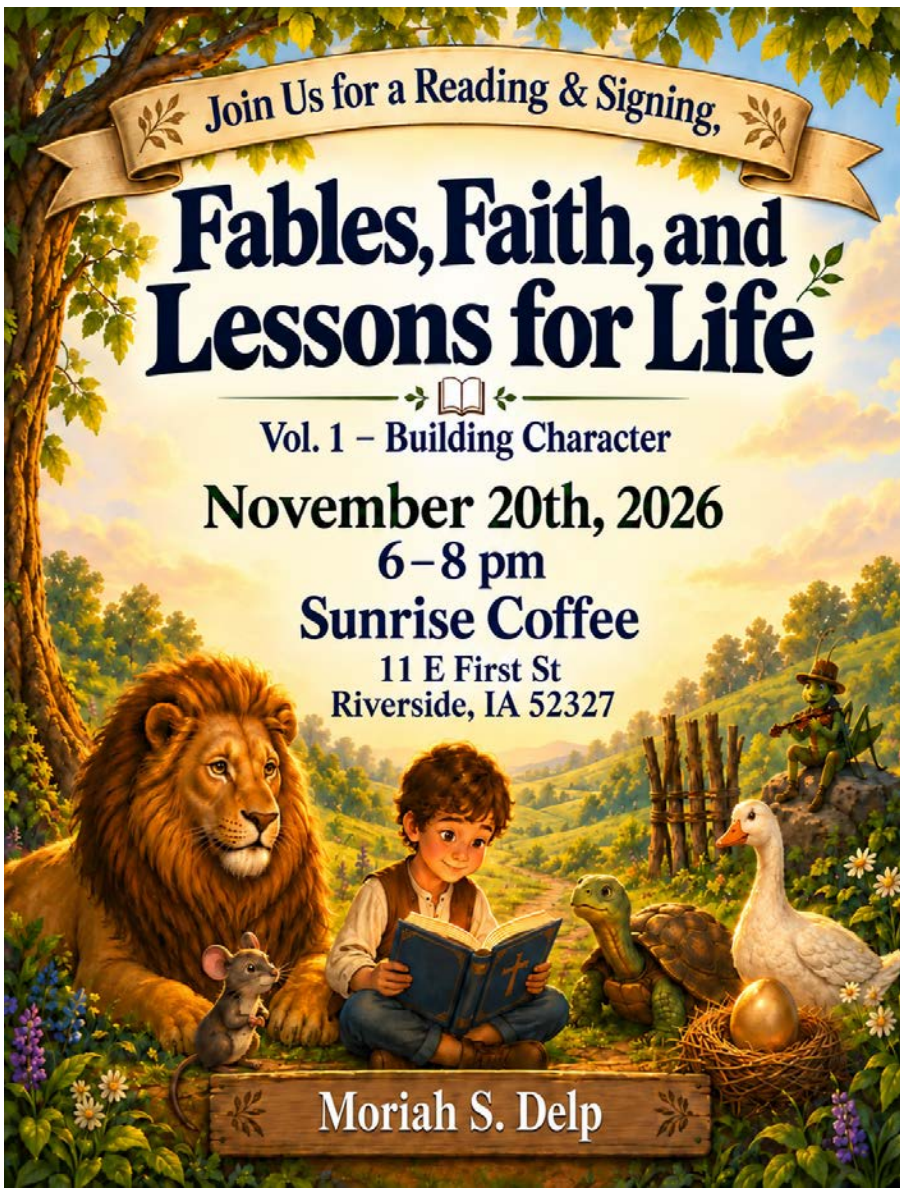
**Which of the seven fables is your favorite, and why?**

"My favorite is The Ant and the Grasshopper. I keep coming back to its morals. 'There is a time to work faithfully, a time to rest gratefully, and a time to celebrate joyfully.'"

"I'm in a season of working hard and preparing for the future, and I'm still learning how to make time for rest. It's easy for me to get so focused on what I'm working toward that I forget to take care of myself along the way. I want to be able to enjoy the future I'm preparing for, and that means making room to rest and celebrate now, too."

**This book took time and effort to complete. What would you like readers to know about the work that went into it?**

"This book was a labor of love. What started as a pet project became something I spent many evenings working on. A lot of that time went into small decisions, from finding the right words for a moral to making sure the Scripture was easy to read on the page. When I ran into formatting problems, I was grateful to have a husband who could help me figure them out. And there was a lot of prayer along the way."




"I kept picturing a parent or grandparent reading the book with a child. If one of these stories gets them talking about a time they had to tell the truth, keep trying, or accept help from someone, that's exactly what I hoped the book would do."

**Have you written anything like this before or worked on similar projects?**

"I've written educational materials through my work, including exercises and handouts that help people understand and practice a skill. Some of that experience carried over. In both kinds of writing, I think about how to explain something clearly and give the reader an example they can picture. For this fable book, I had to work harder on actually creating the picture that was in my head instead of just an explanation."

**Your work focuses on helping others improve their health and well-being. How do these fables and the book as a whole connect with that work?**

"As a physical therapist, I often see how much patience it takes to keep going when progress feels slow. I share the lesson from The Tortoise and the Hare with my patients often because it's a simple reminder that small, steady steps add up. I also see how much it matters to have someone beside you when things are hard. Those experiences shape how I think about perseverance and kindness, and the book gives families a way to talk about what those qualities look like in their own lives.

"Writing the book also gave me a chance to take my own advice. I ask my patients to try unfamiliar things and stick with them even when they feel hard. I wanted to hold myself to that same standard. Creating this book was a way to stretch myself and put my faith into practice by sharing something I believe can help families grow together. I hope they enjoy the book as much as I did during its creation."

**You mentioned in our email conversations that you plan to write more books. What do you have in mind, and when do you hope to begin a second book?**

"I've already started working on a second volume in The Fable and Faith Collection about living with wisdom. Two of the stories I'm developing are The Crow and the Pitcher and The Fox and the Goat. I'm working on showing each story in two parts so readers have a chance to pause and think about what they would do before they see how it turns out. I hope to start working on the second book over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday."

Delp's book is available on Amazon for $4.99 on Kindle and $14.99 in paperback. She will hold a book signing at Sunrise Coffee in Riverside on Dec. 11 from 6 to 8 p.m.

The book features seven fables, each paired with a character lesson:

Honesty: The Boy Who Cried Wolf

Diligence: The Ant & The Grasshopper

Kindness and humility: The Lion & the Mouse

Perseverance: The Tortoise & the Hare

Gentleness: The North Wind and The Sun

Contentment: The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg

Unity: The Bundle of Sticks



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# Holiday Season

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## Prelude to Christmas

### December 4 - 20, 2026

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**Check out www.amanacolonies.com for the full brochure of events happening throughout the businesses this holiday season!**

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### November 27 - December 20

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**Location:** Festhalle Barn, 4707 220th Trail, Amana, IA 52203

**Cost:** Free-will donation*
*Proceeds will benefit local nonprofits and charities.

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|---|---|---|---|
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| Friday, November 27 | 12:00 PM | 7:00 PM | 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM |
| Saturday, November 28 | 10:00 AM | 7:00 PM | 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM |
| Sunday, November 29 | 11:00 AM | 4:00 PM | 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM |
| Friday, December 4 | 12:00 PM | 8:00 PM | 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM |
| Saturday, December 5 | 10:00 AM | 8:00 PM | 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM |
| Sunday, December 6 | 11:00 AM | 5:00 PM | 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM |
| Friday, December 11 | 12:00 PM | 7:00 PM | 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM |
| Saturday, December 12 | 10:00 AM | 7:00 PM | 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM |
| Sunday, December 13 | 11:00 AM | 4:00 PM | 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM |
| Friday, December 18 | 12:00 PM | 7:00 PM | 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM |
| Saturday, December 19 | 10:00 AM | 7:00 PM | 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM |
| Sunday, December 20 | 11:00 AM | 4:00 PM | 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM |

HOLIDAY RECIPES

# Mocha Biscotti with walnuts, and other holiday gifts

BY EILEEN BERAN

Among the many options for holiday gifts, few are more welcome than sweet treats (possibly excluding the stereotypical fruitcake!). My husband and I are blessed with a wealth of friends, siblings, and siblings-in-law, both in the area and scattered across the country, and I've found that a welcome way to spread holiday cheer is with a package of homemade goodies.

Some items that I've sent to people over the years and that keep and ship well are caramel corn, cocoa mix, and cocoa-dusted almonds. (Some of my relatives also enjoy it when I throw in a wall calendar from Stringtown Grocery.)

Also, a standby I include nearly every year is biscotti, or twice-baked Italian cookies. These keep in the freezer for a few weeks so I can make them ahead, and their natural sturdiness that makes them perfect for dunking into coffee also means they hold up well for shipping. Typically, I make two varieties, one of which varies from gingerbread to cranberry-walnut to some other type, and I always make this chocolate variety: mocha biscotti with walnuts. My baking is gluten-free due to my husband's intolerance, but the almond flour makes for a rich and delicious cookie that you'd never guess is gluten free.



## Mocha Biscotti With Walnuts

Active time: 10 minutes
Total time: 2 ½ hours
Yield: 15 to 20 pieces

### Ingredients

1 egg
1/3 cup maple syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 1/4 cups almond flour
2 tablespoons arrowroot starch/flour
1/4 cup coconut flour
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder or cacao powder
1 tablespoon espresso powder (or instant espresso or instant coffee)
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon sea salt
1/2 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
1/2 cup chocolate chips or chocolate chunks (semi-sweet, dark, or milk chocolate)

### Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large mixing bowl, beat together egg, maple syrup, and vanilla until well-combined.
3. In a medium-sized mixing bowl, sift together flours, cocoa, and espresso powder (or instant espresso or instant coffee), baking soda, and salt. Mix well. Stir in walnuts and chocolate chips or chunks.
4. Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients. Mix well with a utensil or clean hands until well combined. Allow the dough to rest for about 15 minutes in order for the coconut flour to swell and absorb moisture.
5. Place the dough on a cutting board or silicone mat. With damp hands, roll into a log approximately the length of your baking sheet, and flatten it slightly.
6. Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until the log expands slightly and the top looks dry and cracked. Allow to cool at least 1 hour, then preheat oven to 300 degrees.
7. Slice log on the diagonal into approximately ½-inch pieces. If some of the pieces come apart as you slice, you might need to hold the sides of the log together as you cut. Lay the pieces on the parchment paper (you can use the same parchment and baking sheet as the first baking). If any pieces come apart during slicing, gently push them back together. They generally hold their shape with the second baking.
8. Bake 40 to 45 minutes until dry and somewhat hard. The slices will harden more as they cool.

### Notes:

•For the icing shown in the photo, you can melt about ½ cup white chocolate chips, thin with about 2 teaspoons of coconut oil, and drizzle onto the pieces with a spoon.

•For shipping as gifts, I just stack the pieces unadorned into Christmas-themed cellophane bags.

•You can make these cookies ahead–they freeze well in an airtight container for a couple of weeks or more.

•Quantities can be scaled up. I typically multiply the recipe by 8 and mix the dough in my largest stainless steel bowl. This yields about 120 pieces.

Nutrition per piece: 153 calories; 10.6g total fat (2.3g saturated fat); 14.3mg cholesterol; 91.9mg sodium; 15.4g total carbohydrates (2.8g fiber,8.7g sugars); 4.1g protein.

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## HOLIDAY RECIPES

# Nostalgic Cookie at Christmas

BY DEBRA PERSONS

I think back on the many, many holiday cookies I have eaten over the years and the memory of this Mincemeat Drop Cookie still sticks with me. I don't bake them every year but I sure do think about them a lot.

Mincemeat Drop Cookie
1 c. butter softened
1 1/2 c. sugar
1 c. brown sugar
2 eggs
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
4 c. flour
1 1/2 c. mincemeat

Cream the butter and the sugars.

Add eggs and beat well.

By hand stir in the dry ingredients.

Fold in the mincemeat.

Drop dough by spoonfuls onto a lightly greased cookie sheet.

Bake in pre-heated 345 degrees oven for 10 minutes until lightly brown.

If desired, glaze warm, not hot, cookies with a mixture of 1 Tbsp. melted butter mixed with 2 c. powdered sugar and a few drops of milk.

Store in sealed container.

# Aunt Pam's Pumpkin Bread

BY DEB PERSONS

Holidays are the best time to make quick breads for yourself or as a gift. Aunt Pam's Pumpkin Bread is a family favorite.

Place the following ingredients into a big bowl:
2 c. flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. cloves
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. nutmeg

In another big bowl place the following:
2 c. sugar
1 lb can of pumpkin
3/4 c. oil
2 eggs

Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients.

Stir gently.

Grease 2 loaf pans or a 9 by 13 cake pan.

Pour the batter into the prepared pans.

Bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour more or less. Use the toothpick test to make sure the middle of the loaf is baked through.

Cool in pans for 10 minutes then remove the loaves from the pans and cool the rest of the way on a wire rack.

# Peanut Butter at Christmas

BY DEBRA PERSONS

Peanut butter is good anytime of the year. It is especially fun to use at Christmas.

**Salted Nut Squares**

4 Tbsp. butter
12 ounces peanut butter chips
14 ounce can sweetened condensed milk
16 ounces salted peanuts
10 ounces mini marshmallows

Melt the butter and the peanut butter chips in a big bowl in the microwave for approximately 3 minutes.

Stir in the sweetened condensed milk and the marshmallows.

Microwave 2 more minutes until the marshmallows puff up and melt.

Stir well.

Grease a 9 by 13 pan and pour half the peanuts in and spread them over the bottom of the pan.

Pour the marshmallow mixture over next.

Sprinkle the other half of the peanuts over the marshmallow mixture.

Chill until firm then cut into squares.

Another fun thing we like to make at Christmas doesn't really have a recipe, the amounts used just depends on how many you want to make. The kids really like to get involved with this treat.

**Fake Butterfingers**

Ingredients:
Cheese Nips crackers
Creamy peanut butter
White chocolate almond bark

Directions:

Make little peanut butter sandwiches using two Cheese Nips crackers with peanut butter spread in between.

Melt the almond bark.

Dip the mini peanut butter cracker sandwiches into the almond bark.

Let them cool on parchment paper

**Enjoy!**






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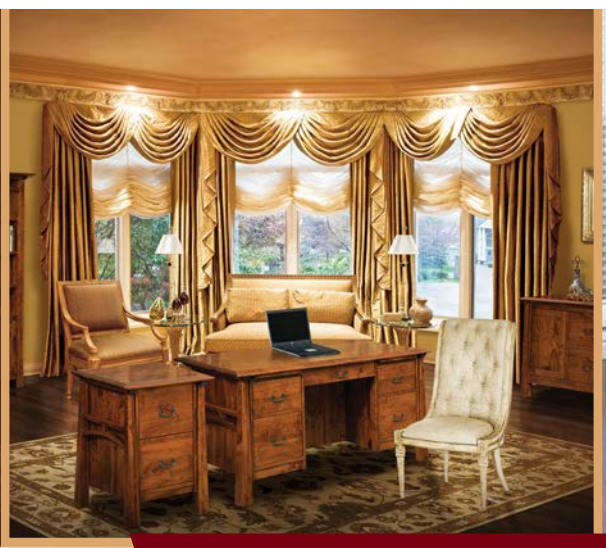
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FEATURED NON-FICTION

# Christmas Concerts in Buggy Land

BY MARY LYNCH SWANDER

"Don't you get bored out there in the middle of nowhere?" many of my urban friends frequently ask.

"Bored? Never," I reply.

"But what is there to do?"

"There's everything to do. Every day there's a new sight or sound, the flutter of the bluebird's wings . . .

"Oh, come on. How about Christmas? You're certainly not going to hear Bach out in the boonies.

"You might."

"What? Where would you go in the middle of nowhere to hear Bach?"

"Harper."

"Huh?"

"At Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, or Clear Creek."

They don't say Mass at that church anymore, a building once built by hard-working and exacting German immigrants, but there sure is a Christmas concert. Every year in early December, Robert McConnell, a brilliantly talented musician, conductor, and hog farmer, ¬brings the Southeast Iowa Symphony and Choir to the church just south of the small town of Harper in the gently rolling plains of Keokuk County, Iowa.

There, the musicians spend the afternoon, transporting the audience into a different realm. The listeners pack into the old wooden pews in the beautifully maintained, and elaborately designed church built in 1899. The church bells ring in the steeple, then McConnell picks up his baton, and the chamber group and the choir begin their concert of holiday classics. The notes of the musicians—violins, viola, cello--blend with the vocals of the choir, filling the church, its acoustics absorbing the sound, then carrying the harmonies, untouched and untarnished, to the ears of the audience.

The reverberations from the music shake the very foundation of the church, a foundation of stone dug out of a local quarry. The brickwork of the walls of the church was also locally quarried. But after a certain point, the brick ran out. And another quarry had to be used. The walls may have been built with two shades of brick, but they are sturdy. Father Rangger, the first resident pastor of the church, saw to that.

In the early days of construction, Father Rangger found one of the new church walls leaning ever so slightly inward. He was not about to tolerate shoddy construction, so he knocked down the whole wall and had it rebuilt.

Inside, the main altar and the two side altars are all intricately carved of wood in the Victorian Gothic style. The pieces are dated circa 1899 and attributed to Nickolas Juhl, an accomplished woodcarver and native-born German from Davenport, Iowa, known for his carvings in area churches. A statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus commands the central altar with statues of St. Paul on the left holding the words of salvation, and St. Peter on the right, holding the keys to the church.

The nave and sanctuary contain 14 stained-glass windows, each depicting a saint, from St. Joseph, to Saint Rose of Lima, to St. Michael, to St. Franciscus. The names of the donors of the windows are etched into the glass below. The windows were costly in their day, and priceless today.

At the completion of the project, Fr. Rangger found that the cost of the church itself was going to sink the parish into debt. So, two days before the dedication, he called all the parishioners together in the pews, then locked the door. No one could leave until they had donated enough money to put the parish back in the black. Two days later, the church was dedicated, debt- free.

Robert McConnell lowers his baton, then introduces the next piece. His comments are scholarly, yet quick and punchy, with the pacing of a stand-up comedian. Everyone wants more music. All the doors are unlocked and no one is in a hurry to depart. Instead, the crowd sits still, lapping in the sound. There will be time enough to stretch and visit over coffee and cookies in the church basement, enough time to process the glorious afternoon of first-rate music, an event close to McConnell's heart, a man with a mission to bring classical music to rural areas.

North of Harper, in a village called Holbrook, in Iowa County, is another deconsecrated Catholic Church, Old St. Michael's. There, another Christmas concert packs in a big audience on Christmas Eve. Many of the descendants of original Irish immigrant settlers perform The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, a traditional Christmas service featuring nine short Bible readings interspersed with carols, hymns, and choir anthems. Originally, the service was created in 1880 in England, with the intent to keep the locals from becoming rowdy in the pubs on Christmas Eve. Eventually, the service made its way to Dublin.

In Holbrook, the two big heavy front church doors open. Attendees climb the steps and confront St. Michael, the Archangel himself, a life-sized statue, slaying the devil with a large sword, expelling him from heaven.

On the Friends of Old St. Michael's Facebook page, you can glimpse a deeper history of the slaying. One of the Friends of the church writes:

Today is Michaelmas, the day Lucifer was expelled from heaven by St. Michael. When he fell to earth, he landed upon a blackberry bush and he then cursed the fruit by spatting upon them; anybody that eats them after Sept. 29th will fall ill and have bad luck. Also, to keep vampires from entering your home you should place a blackberry bush near the door; the blood suckers become so engrossed with counting each vine, thorn, and berry they forget to enter the home. You're welcome.

Another friend replies to the post:

No wonder I don't like blackberries.

Dramatic imagery, storytelling, superstitions and jokes usher you into this historic place that was once the largest parish in the eastern half of Iowa.

Outside, the cemetery near the church is filled with people coming from every county in Ireland, refugees from the Potato Famine and other miseries. But the immigrants weren't necessarily safe here. A stroll past the gravestones tells the story of plagues that ripped through this parish, sometimes whole families dying in rapid succession. Without an understanding of germs and how they were spread, the immigrants were vulnerable to the ravages of diseases like cholera, diphtheria, and malaria.

Inside, the church looks like it could have stepped right out of mid-nineteenth-century Ireland. The nave is filled with carved, wooden pews, holding a couple of hundred people. In the sanctuary, the main altar is framed by one side altar holding a statue of the Blessed Virgin, and another holding a statue of St. Joseph. No ornamental wood carvings adorn the altars. Just a faint line near the ceiling where the roof had been leaking, and the paint flaking in small patches. Years ago, a grant application was submitted for the cost of a new roof, but when the money wasn't forthcoming, past parishioners, without confinement, simply ante upped.

Donors' names attached to the stained-glass windows indicate intermarriage between the Irish and the Amish. The donor may have an Irish first name and an Amish last name, or vice versa. And this Christmas Eve program is a testament to the neighborliness that still exists between the two ethnicities. The Irish decorate the church with candles and pots of bright red poinsettias. They read the Bible readings, play the organ and violin, while a Mennonite may take a solo in the service, or a Mennonite family quartet may sing one of the hymns. Then all join together at the end of the service with the singing of O, Holy Night!

The first time I visited Old St. Michael's, I was so impressed by the

SEE BUGGY LAND | PAGE 17C






## FEATURED NON-FICTION

### THE BUGGY/Continued from Page 16C

spirit of the parish that I wanted to return as soon as I could.

"Do you ever have Mass here?" I asked the caretaker.

"In the cemetery on Memorial Day. The cemetery is still consecrated. The church is not."

"You have Mass outside in the cemetery?"

"Well, an Irish priest comes down from Iowa City. We get all set up in the cemetery with a card table for an altar and folding chairs. Then, rain or shine, the priest looks up at the sky and says, "Well, it looks like it's going to rain, so we better move into the church."

Believe it or not, the Christmas service at the Sharon Center United Methodist Church (or SCUM as the congregation itself calls it) can get a little rowdy. If you want to call toe-tapping, teetotaler, bluegrass music from the southern tip of Johnson County, from four local farmers singing four-part harmony, rowdy.

Every year, Paul Roberts, the MC and leader of the Great Bluegrass Herons band, organizes an Acoustic Christmas program. He gathers together the best of the local musicians in the area. With jokes and patter between their sets, the musicians perform bluegrass, old-time, classical, jazz and scat. Banjos, fiddles, mandolins, guitars, vocals, and a piano fill the church, a building with a tall steeple, pointing the way to the congregants who have traveled up and down the rolling back roads to the concert, the ice slicking the gravel.

Paul grew up on a farm near Sharon Center and fell in love with the banjo. He became an excellent self-taught player, plucking out tunes by ear when he was very young. He found vinyl records of musicians he liked and played them over and over on the phonograph. He listened. He imitated. He tuned in the radio and found other musicians. Rual Yarbrough and Bill Monroe became heroes. He had no formal teachers. Sharon Center was too small for that.

By 1940, the population of Sharon Center was 184, and then, in 1949 it jumped even higher. The new brick church was built, and then, ironically, the big rural decline began. No one knows for certain what the population of Sharon Center is today. A few years ago, the village was dropped off the map, and like Holbrook, it was declared an unincorporated community. Neither hamlet has seen a census taker in years. With a population of 134, Harper has managed to hold onto its designation as a city.

One after another, the musicians assume their places on the SCUM altar. Songs include carols like Joy to the World, Jingle Bells, and Breakin' Up Christmas, an old-time tune in the Appalachian tradition. Breakin' up Christmas is the name for 12 days of partying, dancing and music making, ending on January 6th of every year.

Hooray Jake, hooray John
Breakin' up Christmas all night long
Santa Claus come, done and gone
Breakin' up Christmas right straight along
Don't you remember a long time ago
The old folks danced the doesey-doe

Then when the two-hour concert is about to close, the audience has had their fill of Christmas songs. Instead, they request the Bluegrass Herons play Paul Roberts' song about Monroe Ropp, a local Amish man.

Monroe Ropp and Lester Yoder hauling liquid down the road, 6,000 gallons, in each and every load. One would load and one would spread, Back and forth, they took their turns, When the house began to burn.

Monroe drove down the road and saw that the garage attached to a house was on fire. He knew that calling the volunteer fire department would take too long. Instead, Monroe dared himself to spray the liquid manure he was carrying on the house.

He backed up to the fire
Got close enough to stop,
Put the PTO in gear
And sprayed that slop.
Ba-da-Ropp, Ropp, Ropp.
Ropp, Ropp, ba-da-Ropp.
He put the honey, right on the money.
Ropp, Ropp, ba-da-Ropp.
He made a real mess, but it was all for the best.
Bop, bop, bop.
Oh, Monroe,
Ropp, Ropp, Ropp.
He was in a hurry
To put on the slurry.

In the end, Monroe Ropp became a neighborhood hero and the star of Roberts' folk ballad.

He got his fame 'cause he put out the flame.
Ropp, Ropp, Ropp.
Now you might think it's funny
But they saved a lot of money.
Monroe, he saved the day
In a fragrant way.
Monroe Ropp, Ropp Ropp.
Oh, Monroe Ropp, Ropp.

At the end of the tune, my neighbor Donna jumps up (as she does every time they sing this song) and gives the Herons a standing ovation.

Then suddenly, we're all on our feet, joining Donna, clapping and stomping, cheering for the Great Bluegrass Herons, ushering in the Holiday Season, celebrating the music of our rural lives together, the legends and refrains of our neighbors, thanking the stars above us who led us to this tiny place, this blessed home, that no one will ever find on a map.

Harper Holiday Chamber Concert, Saints Peter and Paul Church, Sunday, December 6, 2026, 2:00 P.M.

Nine Lessons and Carols, Old St. Michael's Christmas Eve December 24, 2026. Check Facebook page for time and information. https://www.facebook.com/groups/117698986967/

The Great Bluegrass Herons and Friends of Acoustic Music Christmas, Sharon Center United Methodist Church, Sunday, December 13, 2026, 7:00 P.M.

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The News

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

# Christmas Shopping in Kalona

## *Kalona offers a variety of Christmas gift items. Here are a few:*

### *Kalona Historical Village*

The Kalona Historical Village has a selection of gift items and stocking stuffers including handmade pens, books, crochet friends, rocks, beeswax candles and local honey products, native Iowa wines and much, much more.

### *Kalona Chocolates*

From stocking stuffers to party favors, Kalona Chocolate Gift Boxes are filled with your choice of handmade chocolate treats that are sure to be delightful gifts for all to enjoy.

Pick-up in store or order online at https://www.kalona-chocolates.com/collections/chocolate-gift-box.
Ice cream is new this year.

### *Kalona Coffee,*

Kalona Coffee offers a variety of hot and cold drinks and a relaxing atmosphere or you can get your favorite drink to go on the Kalona Coffee app. Plus Kalona Coffee offers a variety of pastery items from Rolling Pin Bakery and chocolate treats from Kalona Chocolates.

### *Heather Kemp's Hidden treasures*

Advent Calendars are here, while supplies last. She has a large inventory, perfect for your last minute gifts. Call Heather at 319-330-2353 or have your books shipped.

### *Yotty's Ace Hardware Peanut and Popcorn Days Dec. 10-12*

Yotty's Ace Hardware offers a variety of hardware and other items now and during the popular Peanut and Popcorn Days Dec. 10, 11 and 12. Items on sale during Peanut and Popcorn Days include Therapedic bedding, leather recliners, Milwaukee and Craftsman tools DeWalt drills, drill bits, and many other hardware items, which include a variety of barbecue grills and glassware.

### *Collected Treasures Antiques & Quilts*

From collectable toys to handmade table runners, they have a mix of everything. You're sure to find something for everyone!

### *Stitch N Sew has a variety of fabrics, quilts*

Stitch N Sew Cottage offers a large selection of fabric and sewing notions, ideal for a seamstress including some special Christmas holiday designs. Stitch N Sew also has a great selection of ready-made quilts.

### *1st Class Apparel has 20% Off items*

1st Class Apparel is now under new management but continues to offer a variety of apparel with embroidery or heat stamped logos. Cost of embroidery depends on the number of letters or illustrations. They can put your logo or special message on t-shirts, shirts, jackets, hats or coats.

Manager Gracie Miller says the store offers up to 20% off on selected items while supply lasts.

### *Fresh offers flowers, décor for a variety of occasions*

Scott Allen of Fresh says he has flowers and decor for all occasions. His staff can make award winning plants and vases.

For the holidays, Allen has a good selection of poinsettias and other holiday flowers and décor.

### *Shirley Rae's has Variety of collectibles, clothing*

Shirley Rae's offers a variety of slightly used items including clothing for men and women. Also vintage items.

### *KCTC store offers Variety of electronic items*

KCTC offers a variety of telecommunications services in addition to a store featuring a large variety of electronic supplies.

KCTC store offers TVs in a variety of sizes up to 75 inches. Only a few TV`s are in stock at a time, but they can order whatever you want. Same is true for computers as they can order Apple units to a variety of PC models.

Looking for a place to print your digital photos, KCTC has a Kodak printer.



# Christmas in Kalona 2026

Christmas in Kalona is a long-time tradition that has carried lots of different looks over the years. It has adapted to the community's needs, interests, as well as the support of the volunteers and businesses. This year we are enveloping all generations as the festivities begin at Pleasantview, our local retirement community.

On the evening of Friday, December 4, Pleasantview is hosting a celebration of lights program, where you can carry your memories from past to present, by purchasing ornaments in honor of loved ones. This will be followed by food and fellowship, and lastly, an incredible lighting of the Rockefeller-like tree at their main entrance. Special music will include Mid-Prairie's Madrigal students and the Old Man Band.

Saturday morning, downtown Kalona will be teeming with life as our generous shops open their doors with gifts for children. Youth can pick up their Walking Stocking at the Chamber office or YMCA (Rec Center) and begin collecting items from 25 participating Kalona-area businesses - don't miss the ones outside of our downtown too!

Our Christmas Market is once again hosted in the gym of Kalona's YMCA. We are welcoming 40 different vendors from 18 towns across southeast Iowa. These small businesses will be offering fresh-baked goods, handmade Christmas decor and gifts. You'll also discover farm-raised products like goat milk soaps, lotions, tallows, and essential oil blends. You'll also find timeless classics like Tupperware, Cutco Knives, Pampered Chef and Scentsy.

Between the Christmas Market and our shops around town and country, you are sure to find the perfect gifts for everyone on your list. While we have lots of fabulous shopping options, Christmas in Kalona boasts of joyful activities for all ages. Children are treated throughout the day with free cocoa and cider, photos with friendly alpacas, ornament making, cookie decorating, face painting, and we can't forget - photos with Santa Claus! Mrs. Claus will be back by his side this year, so you may catch a photo with her too.

While strolling around downtown, you can pause to warm up by the firepits, and you may catch Bob & Kristie Black singing some of your holiday favorites. Try your best to cheer up the Grinch at AllenMitchell CPAs. Whether he gets a smile or not, you sure will when you stop by the Kalona Public Library for the cookie walk and a photo in the life-size snow globe.

Once you've found your treasures, visit the community room in the YMCA for gift wrapping (surprise-security for those gifts traveling home with you!) Take a moment to relax at Kalona Chocolates and try your hand at Poured Painting, a perfect craft for all skill levels.

Other businesses like The Vintage Society and Shirley Rae's Quality Resale will be having some of their own special draws in their shops for kids and grown-ups alike. And though this all seems like a full day of fun, it isn't over quite yet.

At 5 p.m., the Lighted Golf Car Parade will drive up B Ave and back down D Ave to the Kalona Historical Village. Here, the fun continues on for a little while longer. The Village will be showcasing decked-out Christmas trees, voted on by you! While you take in the trees, enjoy music by students of Michelle's Musical Keys.

Outside the Village, you can roast smores over the fire and be carried away by the horse-drawn wagon rides. At 6 p.m., kids will gather 'round to see who the four lucky winners of the Optimist Sled Giveaway are.

We know the Holidays can be stressful with schedules, finances, and all the preparations that can entail. Christmas in Kalona is here for you to enjoy. Be treated. Check some things off your list. And hopefully be filled with peace and joy from the generosity of our little town.

Wishing you a very merry Christmas in Kalona.




JJ PETERS/THE NEWS

Kids pose with Santa and Mrs. Claus at last year's Christmas in Kalona.

Grand appliance

EXCLUSIVE SAVINGS ON ALL THE TOP APPLIANCE BRANDS






# Christmas in Kalona

# December 4 & 5

## Friday

### Pleasantview | 811 3rd Street

5:30pm | Celebration of Lights Remembrance Program
6:00–8:00pm | Supper, Fellowship & Live Music — *Old Man Band!*
7:00pm | Community Christmas Tree Lighting

## Saturday

Kalona Christmas Market

### Downtown

Kids' Walking Stocking & Shopping
Stockings available at Kalona Chamber and YMCA
Live Music & Sidewalk Campfires
Cider & Cocoa at Best of Iowa & Kalona Chocolates | 9am-1pm
The Grinch at AllenMitchell | 9am-12pm
Poured Painting at Kalona Chocolates | 2:00-4:00pm

### Kalona Community Center

Kalona Christmas Market | 9am-2pm
Kids' Activities 10am-1pm
Face painting, cookie decorating, ornaments, etc.!
Photos with Santa! | 10am-1pm
Gift Wrapping Station | 9am-2pm

### Kalona Library

Alpaca Selfies | 10:00am-2:00pm
Cookie Walk | 10am *while supplies last*
Life-Size Snow Globe | 9am - 2pm

### Kalona Historical Village

Christmas Tree Walk, Caroling, Food Truck
Wagon rides | 4-7pm
Lighted Golf Cart Parade, KCTC lot to Historical Village | 5pm
Sled Give-away by Kalona Optimists | 6pm

Lighted Golf Cart Parade

**Scan for more info and forms!**

www.kalonachamber.com/christmas-in-kalona
Search for Christmas in Kalona on Facebook!

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