

Scripture:

[Luke 3:4-6](#)

Prayer:

O God, move our hearts to a place of love and hospitality as we prepare for your son Jesus. Through Jesus's birth, we were made brothers and sisters, and your sons and daughters. May we cherish the gift of being family with You, our church, and world. Amen.

Sight:

Longest Night/Blue Christmas: Use small, white paper bags to decorate as luminarias. Find ideas on how to do this online; many people use scissors to cut designs right into the bags. Once decorated, fill with sand and LED lights. Place in front of your home on December 21 to mark the year's longest night. Invite people to drive by to mark the occasion.

Sound:

The Diocese of Erie has created [Joyful Night](#), a service with readings and Christmas carols — including a Christmas tree blessing — you can enjoy in your home or with friends and family using technology. Download the pdf and schedule time to appreciate the true meaning of Christmas as you introduce this new tradition.

Taste and smell:

Tell the story of the candy cane while enjoying some! Download this simple keepsake [poem](#) to make it meaningful. Or, if you would like to share a bedtime story or fireside chat with your loved one, the book [Legend of the Candy Cane](#) provides a beautiful story.

For a real treat, you can watch the eight-minute [video reading](#) of the story, with pictures from the book on YouTube.

Touch:

Connect to love: String a popcorn garland! This activity is about spending time together more than anything. It can be done over several sittings instead of one long time period to make the process easier and more manageable — for both kids and parents! Here are two great sites, one [written](#) and one [video](#), with details on how to create this old-fashioned decoration.

How did this tradition get started? It goes back to the beginning of another holiday symbol. The Christmas tree was a German tradition started by devout Christians in the 16th century, and was brought to German settlements in Pennsylvania, according to History.com. Ironically, Christmas trees

were thought to be pagan symbols by many Americans at the time, and it wasn't until the mid-1800s that the trees became common in American households. This was largely thanks to Queen Victoria and her German husband, Prince Albert, who were sketched with their Christmas tree for *The Illustrated London News*.

In those early days of the Christmas tree, Americans took a DIY approach to decorating, using mostly handmade ornaments. German-Americans favored fruit, nuts and cookies. Popcorn was dyed bright colors and strung in garlands with other food items for a festive effect. Here's a great site from [Parade](#) magazine offering seven fun facts about popcorn garlands.