Core Value Midway
December - Respect

During the month of December, countries around the world celebrate in many different ways. Below is a list of countries and a few ways the children celebrate. We hope you can find something to use that could even start a new tradition with your family and develop respect for other cultures.

Belgium: Children plant wheat on plates December 10th. By Christmas Day, the plates hold tiny wheat fields which are placed on windowsills for decoration.

Denmark: the Danes cut Christmas decorations from balsa or other soft wood and paint them in bright colors. On Christmas Eve, the family clasps hands and circles the tree, singing carols.

England: puppet shows are popular at Christmas...a favorite is Punch and Judy, with songs and dances added. The Cub Scout Handbooks have many ideas to help pass off requirements for puppet making.

Finland: On “Little Christmas, the last Sunday in November, the family makes Christmas ornaments from reeds, straw, wood and paper.

France: French children put their shoes on the hearth in which *le petit Jesus* (little Jesus) might leave a gift. The children make a hoop of greens and berries to hang from the ceiling.

Germany: The homeland of the Christmas tree. Gingerbread houses are made for the children. They in turn leave hay and water outside for St Nicholas’s horse.

Ireland: The family builds a grotto for the Nativity scene. The Holy Family is placed in the center, with angels, animals and shepherds nearby. As Christmas approaches, the Wise Men are placed a little closer to the family each day.

Israel: In December on Hanukkah, children light the eight candles on the Menorah, one each day.

Italy: The *ceppa* (SEP-poh) takes the place of a Christmas tree. The *ceppa* is a Christmas pyramid with candles and decorations of tinsel. Gifts are placed on it.

Mexico: The *piñata* (peen-YAH-tah) is a brightly decorated bag or ball (in many forms and shapes) filled with candy and hung from the ceiling. Blindfolded children then try to break it with a stick. When it breaks, all the children scramble for the candy.

The Netherlands: St. Nicholas visits on December 6th, arriving by steamship and riding through the country on a white horse.

Poland: The lucky children receive presents twice, on St. Nicholas Day, the good saint himself brings presents and on Christmas Eve, they are brought by the Star Man. (The Star of Bethlehem is the most popular image in the Christmas celebration…thus the Star Man is represented and brings his Star Boys with him, dressed as wise men or representing the nativity scene. (According to legend, animals gain the power of speech at midnight and are treated as equals.)

Syria: On Christmas Eve the family close their doors and meet in a courtyard with lighted candles, around a pile of wood that will be lit by the father, after the youngest son reads from their Bible, the nativity story. They watch the way the fire spreads and that will be their lucky fortune for the coming year. They sing songs and then make a wish and jump over the fire after it burns down. They receive their gifts from the smallest camel of the wise men.

Sweden: The season begins on St. Lucia's Day, December 13th, when young girls wearing long white robes and crowns of lighted candles awaken their families with breakfast in bed.

Switzerland: Families share a Christmas Eve supper of Ringli (extra large doughnuts) and hot chocolate. Christkindi arrives in a sleigh drawn by tiny reindeer.

Wales: The Welsh people sing many songs throughout the Christmas season. There are contests in the villages for the best choir. There is a little grotesque creature that goes around the streets dancing to delight all He tries to bite people with his animated horse-head costume and if he gets you, you have to pay a fine. Taffy-pulling is a popular way to spend the afternoon.

Where Carols Came From

Christmas is a festival of the heart…a holiday of much joyous appeal and music is a significant part of Christmas around the world. But have you ever wondered about the origin of Christmas music? The word "carole" originally meant a circle dance. Words were added to the music later on and soon strolling Christmas carolers began the tradition of adding to the joy and brightness of Christmas, by extending charity to those less fortunate or homebound.

Four Christmas carols are highlighted here:

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Originally, this English carol was a simple hymn to the king written by Rev. Charles Wesley. George Whitfield changed it to a carol of the Nativity with several short four-line stanzas. Then, more than 100 years later, an organist named William Cummings rearranged the words into ten-line stanzas and set them to a composition by Felix Mendelssohn…which originally was composed to celebrate the invention of printing!

"It Came Upon A Midnight Clear"

The words for this English carol of the Nativity were written by Rev. Edmund a. Sears, a Harvard-trained Unitarian clergyman, in 1864. A few years later, the music was composed by Richard S. Willis. His melody, however, was actually written for an entirely different hymn. Then, an unknown Yale graduate who had studied music in Europe with the top teachers of that time, paired the words by Sears with the music by Willis, and created the carol that we sing today.

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

In 1865, Bishop Phillips Brooks visited the Holy Land, riding on horseback from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. His first glimpse of Bethlehem was as it slept peacefully on Christmas Eve. Three years later he wrote the words of this carol for the children in his congregation. He then asked his organist, Lewis H. Redner, to compose a melody. For over a week, Redner could not hit upon the right music to suit the words. Then, supposedly while sleeping on Christmas Eve, Redner heard this tune which he called "a gift from heaven"…and then completed the carol.

“We Three Kings of Orient Are”

This American carol is one of the few American ones to gain international reputation. Both words and music were written by Rev. Dr. John H. Hopkins, Jr., a church rector in Pennsylvania. This beautiful carol can be described as a carol of the Magi; it tells of the richness, romance and mystery associated with the East and the Three Wise Men. Because of the music, many people think that it is much older…it was composed in 1857.

WHAT’S XMAS?

The letter X stands for the Greek letter chi. Chi is the first letter in the Greek word for Christ. Over time, the letter X came to stand for the name of Christ. That’s why some people write *XMAS* instead of *CHRISTMAS!*

Games From Other Lands:

Bolivia: Choque (Cho-Kay). Use a forked stick and a croquet ball attached to a 3-foot cord. The ball is tossed in the air and caught in the fork. (for safety, use a smaller ball or variations.

Brazil: Chief Manda (The Chief Orders). One Cub Scout is the Chief and stands in front. When he says, The Chief orders you to laugh,” all other players must laugh. If he says, “He orders you to laugh,” no one should laugh because all valid commands are prefaced by “The Chief”. A player who does not obey proper orders is eliminated. (This game is similar to “Simon Says”)

Chile: Cambio de Instrumentos. “It” leaves the room and other Cubs form a circle. Each is assigned the name of a musical instrument. When “It” returns, the players make the motions required for their instruments. One player gives a secret signal for all players to change to another instrument: he can change as often as he likes. When “It” catches the player who is giving the signal, he joins the circle and the “former leader becomes “It”.

Africa: Bivoe Ebuma (Clap Ball). Divide den into two teams. Teams line up parallel and facing each other six feet on either side of a center line. The two teams toss a small rubber ball back and forth. No player may step across the center line. When the ball is caught, the catcher must clap his hands and stamp his feet once. If a player forgets to clap and stamp, a point is scored against his team. Keep the balls moving fast.

The Cub Scout Promise: the Cubs may enjoy learning the Promise from another land...here are four:

French: *La promesse du Louveteau:*

Je promets de faire mon devoir de mon mieux envers Dieu et ma patrie, d'etre honnete et d'obeir aux lois de mon groupe.

German*: Unser Versprechen heist:*

Ich vespreche mein Bestes zu tun fuer Gott und mein Vaterland, ehrlich zu sein und das Gesetz des "Pack's" zu befolgen.

Italian: *La promessa del Lupetto:*

Io prometto di fare il possibile, di fare il mio dovere a Dio e alla nazione di andare diritto e di obbedire la Legge del Gruppo.

Spanish: Nuestra promesa es:
Prometo hacer cuanto peuda para cumplir mis deberes para con Dios y mi patria, ser honrado, y obedecer la Ley del Pack.