



## Light in the Darkness by Carol Landis

Tuesday, December 21, 2021, the earth will tilt on its axis, placing our northern hemisphere, at the farthest point away from the sun. Winter solstice. Each year, the day with the least amount of sun intersects with the season we celebrate Jesus, "the true light that gives light to all people" (John 1:9), coming to earth. We celebrate the birth of Jesus with lights, and recount the glory of the Lord shining on the dark hillside where shepherds watched sheep, and the notable star in the eastern night sky that led the Magi to Jesus. The intersecting of winter solstice and Christmas seems Divine.

Recently I realized the solar light hanging on a hook along our driveway offers me a visual of **darkness accentuating light**. Headlights, exterior garage lights, even interior house lights lessen the lantern's effect. Its light is most striking in complete darkness. I also noticed the twinkling lights lining the driveway of our neighbor's home are more breath-taking because of the surrounding darkness. Darkness emphasizes light's beauty.

**Light illuminates and dispels darkness.** Psalm 119:105 speaks of God's Word as a lamp, emitting light for the next step. The area close to the light is not dark. Light brings clarity, hope, and often a new perspective. In John 8:12, Jesus not only refers to Himself as "the light of the world," but also promises: "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Light. Do we see His Light in our dark places? Do we seek His Light? Is there a problem with the connection to Jesus, our Source, like that bulb with a poor connection in a string of Christmas lights? It's a blessing to acknowledge our disconnect, and ask Jesus to reconnect us and scatter the darkness.

Beyond ambiance, Christmas lights remind us that Jesus came as Immanuel: God with us. Bringing light, and love, to dark places. Basking in His Presence, we can then be conduits of His Light to those around us. "But you are a chosen people...a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9)."

**Lord, in our dark places, still us to seek and absorb Your light. Then Lord, lead us to those who need to experience Your Light.**

**Go tell – Our Savior, the Light of the World, is here!**

# December 2021 |



WOMEN'S MINISTRY MISSION STATEMENT: Encouraging women to connect in deeper, genuine relationships both with each other and with Jesus Christ.



# Making Connections

Meet **Kara Derstine**: When I think about the word 'spice', my thoughts turn to my spice drawer that is a puzzle of different sized bottles arranged in a semi-organized fashion, so I can more easily find what I'm looking for... what the recipe calls for or what I think is needed to season whatever it is I'm cooking. And aren't we all like my spice drawer? We are each packaged differently and bring a different flavor profile to the body of Christ. Yes, God has given each one of us unique gifts and talents, personality traits and quirks, experiences and intuitions that can help us work together to further His kingdom. It is in that spirit that I share a little about myself.



I was born in the late '70s to Feryl and Connie Souder and joined my older brother, Jeremy. Jer likes to say he was such a wonderful child, so our parents thought they wanted more children. Then they had me, so they immediately stopped. I SAY, they had him and thought, "we can do better than this!" So they had me... Voila – perfection – and their family was complete. :) Both scenarios are false – my parents were very pleased and happy with the son and daughter God blessed them with... a family of four.

I grew up loving people and sports – and to this day, both hold true! As a family, we attended Souderton Mennonite Church, where I was baptized in May of 1997. I went through Christian education--Pennview, Christopher dock, EMU (a year at LaSalle University too) and enjoyed both the friendships and the athletic opportunities at all of those institutions. Most of my closest friendships were fostered during those years, and I actually went to Franconia Sr MYF activities with my best friend, who attended Franconia. This was my first introduction to Franconia Mennonite Church.

In my childhood and to this day, my parents exemplified what it means to serve – giving of their time, talent and treasure freely. I appreciate the quiet ways that they shared their faith by their actions, which spoke loudly to me – much is caught, not taught.

My Franconia roots would deepen when I met this handsome guy, Zach Derstine, during the Spring of my senior year of high school. We went to school together for 13 years, but never really knew each other. Needless to say, we hit it off and were married 5 1/2 years later. There is a lot more to that story, but I'll save that for an in-person conversation!

As a dating couple, we attended Franconia, but upon our marriage, we began attending Souderton Mennonite regularly. That is where we stayed for the next 18 years, and we enjoyed our time in that congregation, occasionally visiting Franconia with Zach's parents, Jan and Earl.

God has grown our family with three wonderful children... Celeste is 17 and a junior at Dock, Stellan is 15 and a freshman at Dock, and Scarlett is 12 and in 6th grade at Dock. And let's not forget the kid's favorite sibling – their hairy brother, Xander, who weighs a whopping 10 pounds and only barks. When people ask me what I do, I usually respond first with being a mom and wife, which involves all the things you ladies know... I am so aware of the passing of time and how quickly these years have gone and continue to go. We try to 'slow down' and 'be present' and 'let unimportant things go' and 'soak it all in'. That's a tall order in today's world. I also enjoy coaching field hockey (I just finished my 4th season as the Varsity assistant at Dock High School. I had the privilege of coaching youth from this congregation! Our postseason play extended to the 2nd round of states – go girls!!). In addition, I enjoy taking care of others – specifically women – and encouraging them to have their beautiful inside match their beautiful outside, by choosing self care.

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# Making Connections

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My walk with the Lord hasn't been a walk - it's been a pursuit. Sometimes it has felt like an uphill climb. And as I have sought after the Lord, He has met me. Romans 8:38-39 is a favorite verse of mine. "And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons. Neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow – not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below – indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Time and time again, He has shown His faithfulness to me, my family, and others. And He will be faithful in the future, as time moves on. We all need 'spices' in our lives to temper the bad and enhance the good, to create delicious tasting flavor that is pleasing to Him. God has placed wonderful friends in my life to encourage me in my relationship with Him... I have been blessed so deeply by these women. I have a deep love of prayer and that sustains me as I praise and adore, repent, and ask things of The Lord. I also have a heart of worship and love music. They are both an important part of my daily time with The Lord.

Coming to Franconia was not a decision our family took lightly. It was prayerful and a change we had prayed about for several years, and finally felt led to make. It has been, in a way, a homecoming... especially for Zach. Zach and I enjoy adult Sunday school class and our children enjoy being a part of the youth programs. What great flavor we have experienced from this church family with its own variety of spices. Thank you for welcoming us so warmly.

## What's Happening for Women

Looking for an opportunity to be a blessing to others as we enter the Christmas season? Come help us assemble

### Women's Hope Kits

**December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00pm**

In the Upper Fellowship Hall



Women's Ministry is partnering with World Vision to assemble Hope Kits for women who face uncertain futures. All items will be supplied; we just need help packing them and writing notes in the notebooks to encourage the women who will receive them!

We will also be collecting donations to help cover the cost of the kits (100 kits, \$11.00/kit)

ALSO: We will have a **Hot Chocolate Bar** for you to enjoy while packing and fellowshiping with other ladies!

Bring a favorite mug along to use, if you like!



### Mommy & Me Christmas Craft

Wed, Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>

11:00am

Children's Singing  
Room

Save the Date:

### Comforter Blitz

January 18 & 19

\*Childcare will be  
provided



# December 2021

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
			1	2 Women's Hope Kits 7:00pm	3	4
5 Christmas Song Service 6:30pm	6	7	8 Mommy & Me Craft 11am	9	10	11
12 Christmas Caroling 5:30pm	13	14 Sewing Circle 8am-4pm Prayer Shawl Ministry 7pm	15 Sewing Circle 8am-4pm	16	17	18 Live Nativity 6-8pm
19	20	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 6:30pm	25 Merry Christmas!
26	27	28	29	30		

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**THE SPICE**