

CCCC is Celebrating the Season!

The holiday season is here and to get in the spirit, the entire school will be using the same wonderful story as an inspiration for our curriculum! All of the classrooms will be using the books *Pick a Pine Tree* written by Patricia Toht and illustrated by Jarvis to introduce some fun and festive learning activities that will inspire wonder and festivity as we celebrate this Christmas season!

Pick a Pine Tree is a delightful rhyming book about a young family that travels to a pine tree farm to choose the perfect tree for their home. The family works together to get everything ready so that they can host a “tree decorating party” for their friends and neighbors, who help the family turn their simple pine tree into a beautiful Christmas tree! What makes this story special is that each illustration highlights the rhyming text in a magical way that engages the reader (teachers and children, alike!) to explore and create experiences that the characters in the book enjoy. Whether it is smelling the piney scent of the tree, hanging twinkling white lights, singing holiday carols, or making ornaments – the story and illustrations inspire endless ways to celebrate with friends and family!

Over the next three weeks we will be doing many of the same projects highlighted in the story with the children in our classrooms. Because many of these activities will take two or three days to complete, we are not sending home the traditional "grid" lesson plans, and opting instead for some festive and fun flexibility! In addition, we will be taking inspiration from some of the children who have already read the story with a teacher and shared their ideas from the story. Here's some of the things that we will be doing:

The Scents of the Season: The story highlights the scents of the pine tree. We will be exploring pine and other holiday scents by bringing in pine and fir boughs, vanilla beans, cinnamon, oranges, cloves, and peppermint to see which scents we like the best!

So Many Snowflakes and Stars: The backdrop of many of the illustrations are full of snowflakes and stars – both prominent shapes of the season. We will be creating snowflakes and stars (along with many other seasonal shapes!) by using printing with ink and paint on a variety of paper, tracing stencils with pencils and markers, snipping coffee filters to create snowflakes, gluing and painting popsicle sticks into stars, building three-dimensional stars and snowflakes with toothpicks and marshmallows, and using q-tips and paint to create snowy or starry scenes.

Sliding Sleds: The story highlights sleds and with the early season’s snow, we will be using our sleds on the playground to pull and push our friends in the snow! But why limit our sledding to outside? After listening to *Pick a Pine Tree*, children in Room 25 suggested that we “make sleds out of cardboard boxes or blocks to pull our teddy bears around the room” - what a great idea!

Twinkle Lights and Decorations: Hanging lights and decorative garlands gorgeously illustrated in the book and inspired the children in Afternoon Enrichment to suggest that “we should hang beautiful Christmas lights” in our school and “make pretty hanging decorations to put

up, too”. We will indeed be hanging up some white twinkle lights in each classroom, as well as making paper chains and decorative garland to hang!

Ornaments for the Tree: The family in the story invites their neighbors over for a tree decorating party and together everyone decorates the tree with wonderful ornaments and trinkets! Your children will be making some unique and fun ornaments for your Christmas tree at home – or to use as gifts to family and friends. Snowflakes, candy canes, baubles and balls, all kinds of keepsakes for this Christmas and for years to come!

Packages, Wrappings, and Ribbons: The illustrations in *Pick a Pine Tree* show the family wrapping gifts with gift wrap, ribbons, and bows. We will use gift wrap, ribbon, and bows in a multitude of festive ways: snipping and cutting ribbons, bows, and giftwrap scraps and creating beautiful collages; practice gift-wrapping by using gift wrap, scissors, and tape- lots of it- to wrap some of our unit blocks; using colored bows to create patterns on cardboard; and of course – wrapping a special present for their family!

Jingle Bells and Fancy Baubles: We will be using some pipe cleaners, ribbon, beads, and bells to create our very own “jiggle bell” bracelets that we will use to practice singing our Christmas Carols for our holiday Pajama Party on Thursday, December 12 in Parish Hall! (See details below).

Making and Sending Christmas Cards: The story and illustrations highlight homemade holiday cards. And of course, we will also be making and sending out holiday cards...keep an eye out for a delivery to your mailbox!

Parts of a Pine Tree: We will be exploring all kinds of natural items – and using many of them in our art, sensory, building, and music making! From using pine boughs to create prints, swags, and decorations to using branches and Papa Ron’s Branch Blocks to build with and make music, we will have fun exploring the nature side of Christmas, too!

Candy Canes – How Are They Made? When reading the story to a group of children in Afternoon Enrichment, one of the kiddos asked how candy canes are made and if we could make them...what a fantastic question and great idea! We will be watching a short video on how candy canes are made and making “candy canes” out of model magic, pipe cleaners, etc. – and of course, tasting candy canes!

Christmas “Crackers”: The illustrations highlight the beloved tubed gifts known as “crackers”, so we will be opening some fun Christmas Crackers to see what’s inside – and then try our hands at making our own “crackers” out of toilet paper tubes, gift wrap, and ribbon!

Stories New and Old: Although we are using *Picking a Pine Tree* as our “guide” for our curriculum, our classrooms and story times will be filled with wonderful collections of holiday classics and some newer children’s books that not only highlight Christmas, but also introduce traditions and celebrations from around the world. If your family has a special tradition, celebration, or story that you would like to share – please let us know!

Recycled Treasures: 'Tis the season for gift wrap scraps and cardboard boxes! As you prepare for the upcoming holiday, please help us out with your recycled/upcycled treasures that we can put to good use:

- scraps of gift wrap or ribbon
- cardboard tubes from gift wrap, toilet paper, or paper towels
- old holiday greeting cards
- holiday catalogs or magazines with seasonal pictures
- child-safe décor, garland, ornaments that you may be ready to donate
- smaller cardboard boxes or cardboard “trays”
- holiday themed fabric or craft supplies that you just haven’t gotten around to using

Important Upcoming Dates to Remember:

Thursday, December 12

Holiday Pajama Party and Sing Along in Parish Hall

Rooms 24 and 25: 11:00AM

Rooms 109 and 113: 11:30AM

Friday, December 20

CCCC Closes at 12:00PM

No PM Classes or Lunch Bunch

Monday, December 23, 2019 through Friday, January 3, 2020

CCCC Closed for Christmas Vacation

Monday, January 6, 2020

CCCC Reopens