

December 8th

James 5:7-10

Karen and Travis Webster

It is easy to become discouraged with the state of the world right now. However, Advent is supposed to be a time of preparation and hope. One of the ways we have enjoyed getting ready for the coming of Christ into the world is by putting up wildlife-friendly garlands and ornaments on the evergreen trees and bushes in our backyard for the birds (and other critters) who are wintering over where we live in western Pennsylvania. Our winters are long and cold, and they seem to appreciate the nourishment!

On the one hand, this fills us with great joy, because we can provide sustenance for the birds (our backyard choir) – northern cardinals, white-breasted nuthatches, blue jays, red-bellied woodpeckers, black-capped chickadees, and others. Plus, seeing their bright colors and active movement cheers us up even on the dreariest days and gives us the opportunity to stay connected with nature during a time when we don't spend as much time outside as we do during the warmer months. This is restorative to our souls. When we put out food for the birds, we are humbly reminded that they are providing so much more to us than what we are giving to them, much like how God gives us far more than we are ever able to offer in return.

If you would like to decorate your yard, church, and/or other outdoor spaces during the holidays (and other times of the year), here are a few links that you might enjoy checking out:

- <https://www.audubon.org/magazine/winter-2020/diy-outdoor-holiday-decorations-double-delectable>
- <https://www.audubon.org/news/make-your-own-suet>
- https://www.sfvaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Audubon_Guide_Bird_Feeding_printPDF.pdf

Prayer: Lord, thank you for giving us backyard choirs who not only remind us of your providential care, but also assist us in singing out for joy at your coming into this world. Amen.