



Greetings, Children's Faith Formation Families,

As we enter the season of Advent, we have compiled this packet of materials to support your family's journey to Bethlehem and the mystery of Christmas.

You will find in the packet an Advent calendar with activities that your family can engage in together and with other members of our St. John's community. There are some activities and supplies in the packet to support this.

One of the activities that you can engage in as a family is to explore the story of Advent and Christmas, from the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ to Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, the wonder and awe of the shepherds, the Wise Men who are always late, ending with the cow who is amazed to find a baby in the food box on Christmas morning. We have posted a video of this story and are providing you with the materials to create your own cards so that you can retell the story and make connections to your own family's stories about Christmas. \*For the Bethlehem outline, you will cut it out and fold on the lines connecting with tape.

You will also find activities from Sparkhouse for exploring Advent and Christmas around the world.

Please enjoy the activities as a family and as cherished members of the St. John's community as we all journey to Bethlehem.

December 19 at 10:30 AM in the Historic Church - Christmas Pageant.

December 19 at 6 PM: Walking to Bethlehem – we will journey to several different stations on our campus, as we hear the Christmas story, ending up at the Living Creche.

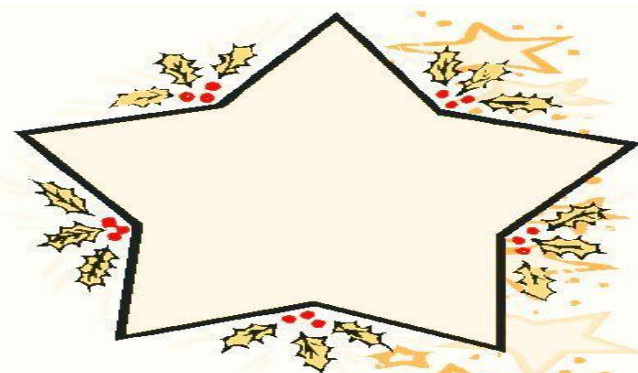
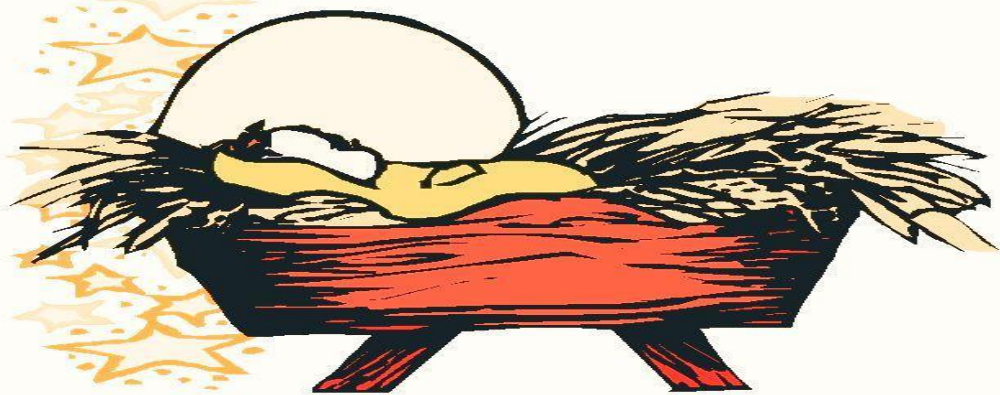
December 24 at 3 PM: Younger children help build the creche at our Creche service in ASH with Chaplain Kiona.

Blessings to you and yours, Your Children's Faith Formation Committee



<b>November 28</b> Luke 21:25-36 <b>Church &amp; CFF</b> *Set up a Nativity scene in your house, but don't add baby Jesus yet!	<b>November 29</b> Matt. 1:20-21 *Learn how to make origami stars. *Help decorate tree	<b>November 30</b> Luke 2:4-5 *Do someone else's chores * Sing Carols	<b>December 1</b> 1 John 5:11 *Pray for the people who have helped you this year - teachers, doctors, family	<b>December 2</b> Luke 2:10 *Say "I love you" to your family	<b>December 3</b> Isaiah 9:6 * Share a smile and say hello to as many people as possible	<b>December 4</b> Luke 1:30-32 * Look at a map and see how far Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem
<b>December 5</b> Luke 3:1-6 <b>Church &amp; CFF</b> *Make a book telling the Christmas story and share it with someone	<b>December 6</b> Matt. 12:21 *Write a letter to Jesus thanking him for the greatest gift of all.	<b>December 7</b> Isaiah 7:14 *Watch a Christmas movie	<b>December 8</b> Matt. 1:18-25 *Call family who you don't see often to say "I love you"	<b>December 9</b> Rev. 17:14 *Make Christmas cookies	<b>December 10</b> Isaiah 9:2 *Ask mom/dad if they need help with anything	<b>December 11</b> Matt. 2:1-12 *Make a special ornament for the Christmas tree
<b>December 12</b> Luke 3: 7-11 <b>Church &amp; CFF</b> *Pray for those who feel alone.	<b>December 13</b> Luke 3: 12-18 *Say thank you five times!	<b>December 14</b> Matt. 2:23-25 * Donate toys to needy children	<b>December 15</b> Matt. 1:24 *Take a walk/drive and look at Christmas lights	<b>December 16</b> Isaiah 9:6-7 *Send Christmas card to a service member	<b>December 17</b> Matt. 2:13-14 *Read a favorite Christmas book	<b>December 18</b> 1 Peter 1:3 *Retell the Advent story
<b>December 19</b> Luke 1:39 - 45 <b>10:30 AM Christmas Pageant</b> in Historic Church  <b>6 PM Outdoor Walk to Bethlehem</b>	<b>December 20</b> John 12:36 *Make a list of things you are grateful for *Talk about how the shepherds might have felt	<b>December 21</b> Proverbs 3:5 *Visit the living Creche *Polar Express night	<b>December 22</b> Matt 3:17 *Sing Christmas Carols *Talk about earlier Christmases you remember	<b>December 23</b> Luke 2:14-20 *Call someone you love * Talk about when you were born	<b>December 24</b> Matt. 29-30 <b>*3 PM Christmas Eve Laying the Creche service</b> *Read the Christmas story	

Advent  
Calendar  
Activities  
for  
Children's  
Faith  
Formation  
2021



# Advent I

**Today's lesson**, together with the next three, helps children anticipate the Mystery of Christmas. Together we journey toward Bethlehem, guided by the prophets (in today's lesson), and then joined by the Holy Family, the shepherds and the Magi (in the next three lessons). Finally, we arrive at the birth of Jesus, when the light of Christ is lit. For this lesson, and the three that follow, you can use the pictures on this page, but you might want to use a Nativity set if your family owns one.

## How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today's lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about the picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today's story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way.

You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. If you retell the presentation, you will need:

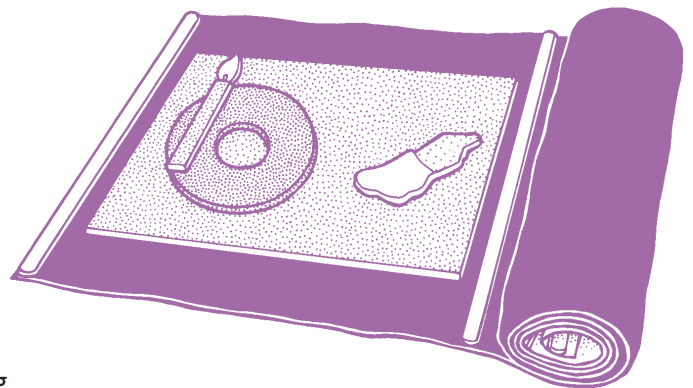
- five candles (three purple, one pink and one white, or four blue and one white, depending on your church's custom)
- *optional*: candle snuffer
- *optional*: You might like to use the home version of the Godly Play Advent materials, called "Mini Advent," available from Godly Play Resources. (To order, call 1-800-445-4390 or visit [www.godlyplayresources.com](http://www.godlyplayresources.com).)

Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

## The Presentation

A king is coming, but not the kind of king that people thought was coming. This king had no army, no great house, and no riches. This king was a baby who is born in a barn.

The coming of this King is a mystery. A mystery is sometimes hard to enter. That is why this time is important—the time of Advent. Sometimes people walk right through this mystery and don't even know it is there.





Christmas is such a great mystery that it takes four weeks to get ready to enter it. During this time, we are on the way to Bethlehem with the prophets, the Holy Family, the shepherds, the angels, the Magi, and more. This journey was not just back then or there; it is also here and now.

Today we remember the prophets. They came so close to God and God came so close to them that they knew something important was going to happen in Bethlehem.

They pointed the way to Bethlehem. They didn't know exactly what was going to happen there, but they knew this was the place.

Today we remember the prophets. *(Light one of the purple candles.)*

This is the light of the prophets. Let's enjoy the light.

Look. Do you see how the flame is in just one place? It is right here. When I "change" the light, it will no longer be in just one place. *(Gently snuff or blow out the candle.)*

Watch. Do you see it? It is spreading out, getting thinner and thinner as it fills up the room with the light of the prophets. Anywhere you go here you will be close to the prophets.

Prophets can be boys, and prophets can be girls. Any of us here might be a prophet too.

## Godly Play Understanding Play (Part I)

**In every Parent Page,** we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. To fully enter into Godly Play, we need to be deeply aware of what makes *real* play and what distracts or detracts from it.

So many activities that we choose for leisure aren't really play but *working* at play. For your own personal exploration, choose an activity that feels like wasting time.

That's right. Set aside about thirty minutes and "waste" it. That idea runs counter to everything our busy, pragmatic culture believes in, so don't multitask and don't

do anything you feel you "should" do. No product, just deep concentration.

You may discover that "wasting time" this way draws you into your own creative process. You may connect with language in a new way, and you may not even want to use language at all.

When you make "room" in your day for something like this, it is an invitation for God, the Creator, to come and play too. It also opens you up again to what you did by nature as a child. Play, then, is an experience you, God, and children have in common.

# Advent II

**This lesson**—the second in Advent—continues to prepare children for the Mystery of Christmas. We move toward Bethlehem, guided by the pointing prophets, with the Holy Family, the shepherds, and the Magi. We arrive at the birth of Jesus, when the light of Christ is lit. This week's presentation focuses on the Holy Family. For this lesson you can use the pictures as you retell it, and you might want to use a Nativity set if your family owns one.

## How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today's lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today's story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way.

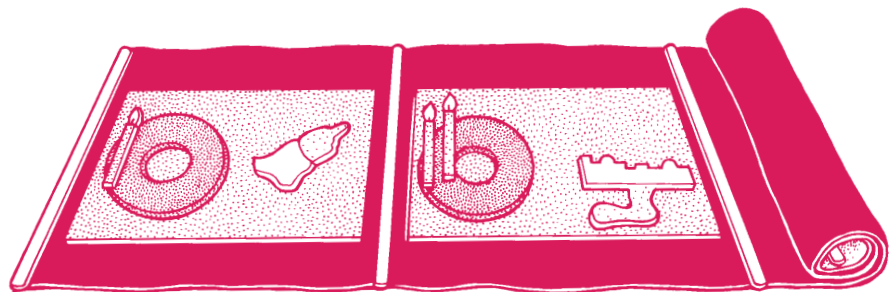
You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. If you retell the presentation, you will need:

- five candles (three purple, one pink and one white, or four blue and one white, depending on your church's custom)
- Nativity figures of Mary, Joseph and the donkey
- *optional:* candle snuffer
- *optional:* You might like to use the home version of the Godly Play Advent materials, called "Mini Advent," available from Godly Play Resources. (To order, call 1-800-445-4390 or visit [www.godlyplayresources.com](http://www.godlyplayresources.com).)

Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

## The Presentation



On the first Sunday in Advent we remembered the prophets. Today we remember the Holy Family and we light two candles. The Holy Family is on the way to Bethlehem and we are going with them.

Here is the Mother Mary. (*Gently touch each figure as you name it or bring them to the story.*) Here is the Father Joseph. Here is the donkey.

Mary was about to have a baby. It is very hard to walk when you are about to have a baby. Sometimes she could not take another step. Then she rode on the donkey.

It is also hard to ride on a donkey when you are about to have a baby. When she couldn't ride another step, she got down, and walked. She rode and she walked.

They must have been the last people coming up the road to Bethlehem that night.

Here is the light of the prophets. (*Light the purple candle lit for Advent I.*)

Here is the light of the Mother Mary and the Father Joseph as they make their way to Bethlehem. (*Light a second purple candle.*)

Let's enjoy the light.

Now watch. I am going to change the light. Do you see how the light of the prophets is just in one place? I am going to change the light so that it can be in every place. (*Gently snuff or blow out the prophet candle.*)

Watch. Do you see how the light of the mother Mary and the father Joseph is just in this one place? I am going to change the light so that it can be in every place. (*Gently snuff or blow out the Holy Family candle.*)

Do you see how the light is not gone? It is changed. It is not in one place. Now it is spreading out, getting thinner and thinner, to fill up the whole room. The room is filling up with the light of the prophets and with the light of the mother Mary and the father Joseph. Anywhere you go in this room you can come close to them today.

## Godly Play Understanding Play (Part 2)

**In every Parent Page,** we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. To fully enter into Godly Play, we need to be deeply aware of what makes *real* play and what distracts or detracts from it.

Research suggests that about 20% of the energy of young mammals in the wild is spent purely in "play," activity that serves no observable purpose. Why would nature favor the use of so much biological energy in the service of seemingly useless activity? Perhaps it is not as "useless" as it seems.

As a culture, we struggle with the purpose and meaning of play. Ancient views of play

related it to power (status, victory), to fate (magic, luck), to community identity (festivals, cooperation), or to frivolity (nonsense as opposed to work). The modern view sees play as involving progress (adaptation, growth), the imaginary (creativity, fantasy), or the concerns of the self (peak experiences, leisure). *Our* view is that play involves all of this. That is why it is so hard to define.

The first thing to acknowledge, then, as we struggle to understand play, is its ambiguity. It is tough to define! Could it be that play, by its very nature, cannot be captured using precise language, but rather through the language of poetry, overflowing with energy and life?

# Advent III

**This lesson**—the third in Advent—continues to prepare children for the Mystery of Christmas. We continue moving toward Bethlehem, guided by the pointing prophets, with the Holy Family, the shepherds, and the Magi. Finally, we arrive at the birth of Jesus, when the light of Christ is lit. This week's presentation focuses on the shepherds. For this lesson you can use the pictures on this page and/or use a Nativity set if your family owns one.

## How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today's lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today's story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way.

You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. If you retell the presentation, you will need:

- five candles (three purple, one pink and one white, or four blue and one white, depending on your church's custom)
- Nativity figures of Mary, Joseph, the donkey, shepherd(s), and sheep.
- *optional*: candle snuffer
- *optional*: You might like to use the home version of the Godly Play Advent materials, called "Mini Advent," available from Godly Play Resources. (To order, call 1-800-445-4390 or visit [www.godlyplay.com](http://www.godlyplay.com).)

Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

## The Presentation



On the first Sunday in Advent we remembered the prophets. On the second Sunday we remembered the Holy Family. (Touch the Holy Family or bring them to the story.) On the third Sunday in Advent we remember the shepherds who were standing in the fields around Bethlehem keeping their sheep and we light three candles. They were trying to stay awake so the wolf could not come and get the sheep. Suddenly there was so much light in the sky that it hurt their eyes.

They were afraid. Then they heard singing in the sky! Angels were singing, “Don’t be afraid. We bring you tidings of great joy. Peace on earth and good will to everyone. A child is born. Go. Hurry. Run to Bethlehem to see the child who will change everything.”

Here is the candle of the prophets. (*Light the candle for Advent I.*) Here is the candle of the Holy Family. (*Light the candle for Advent II.*) Here is the candle of the shepherds. (*Light the pink candle.*)

Look—there is something different about this candle. It is the color of roses. This is to remind us of the great joy the angels sang of. It also helps us remember that even if it is very serious to get ready to come close to a great mystery like Christmas, you can’t be serious all of the time. This is the Sunday when it is time for a little celebration.

There is one more thing about the color of roses. It is also one of the colors for the Mother Mary. We remember her again, for without the Mother Mary, there would be no baby.

Let’s enjoy the light.

Now I am going to change the light. Do you see how the light of the prophets is just in one place? Watch. (*Gently snuff or blow out the prophet candle.*)

Now it is changed, and the light that was in just one place is spreading out. It gets more invisible as it spreads out. Soon it will fill up the whole room.

Here is the light of the Holy Family. Now watch; I am going to change the light. (*Gently snuff or blow out the Holy Family candle.*) Look. It is spreading out and filling up the whole room. Just because it is hard to see doesn’t mean that it isn’t there.

And here is the light of the shepherds. I am going to change the light. Do you see how it is in one place? (*Gently snuff or blow out the shepherd candle.*) Look. It is filling up the room with the shepherds and mixing with the Holy Family and the prophets. Anywhere you go in the room today they will all be there.

## Godly Play Understanding Play (Part 3)

**In every Parent Page,** we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. To fully enter into Godly Play, we need to be deeply aware of what makes *real* play and what distracts or detracts from it.

Perhaps we can clarify what play is by defining its opposite. Our search for the opposite of play will involve language, but also include nonverbal, body-based “knowing.”

Some suggest that “seriousness” is the opposite of play. While seriousness may try

to exclude play, play includes seriousness. Is “work” the opposite of play? For many people, their work *is* play; think of the artist, athlete, or business person who experiences work and play as two parts of a unified rhythm of life rather than opposites.

Godly Play suggests that the opposite of play is *emptiness*. When we are at play, we are full of life, connected to the game and to the players in the game. Energy seems to expand rather than be used up.



# Advent IV

**This lesson**—the fourth in Advent—continues to prepare children for the Mystery of Christmas. We continue moving toward Bethlehem, guided by the pointing prophets, with the Holy Family, the shepherds and the Magi. Finally, we arrive at the birth of Jesus, when the light of Christ is lit. This week's lesson focuses on the wise ones and the celebration of Christmas.

## How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today's lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today's story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way. You are supporting

the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. If you retell the presentation, you will need:

- five candles (three purple, one pink and one white, or four blue and one white, depending on your church's custom)
- Nativity figures of Mary, Joseph, the donkey, shepherd(s), sheep, the three magi, Jesus and the manger
- *optional*: candle snuffer
- *optional*: You might like to use the home version of the Godly Play Advent materials, called "Mini Advent," available from Godly Play Resources. (To order, call 1-800-445-4390 or visit [www.godlyplayresources.com](http://www.godlyplayresources.com).)

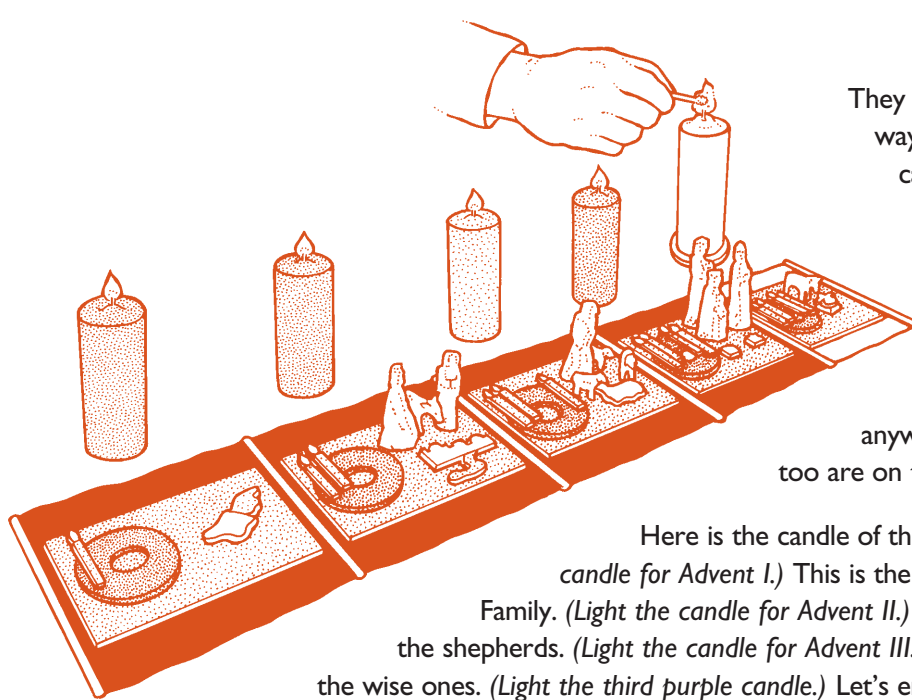
Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

## The Presentation

On the first Sunday in Advent we remembered the Prophets. On the second Sunday, the Holy Family. (Touch Mary, Joseph and the Donkey or bring them to the story.) And on the third Sunday we remembered the shepherds. (Touch the shepherd(s) and sheep or bring them to the story.)

On the fourth Sunday in Advent we remember the three kings, the wise ones, the Magi, and we light four candles. They came from far in the East, and of all the things they knew, they knew the most about the stars. They knew where each star was supposed to be at each time of the year, so they could tell people when it was time to plant their crops or take a trip on the ocean in a boat, or cross the high mountains.

Suddenly they saw the wild star. It was not on any of their star maps. It went where it wanted to go. It did not stay put. They decided to follow the wild star to see where it was going and what it wanted to show them.



They followed the star all the way to Bethlehem, but they came from so far away that they got there after the baby was born. Every year they arrive on January 6th, but we remember them now anyway, because, like us, they too are on the way to Bethlehem.

Here is the candle of the prophets. *(Light the candle for Advent I.)* This is the candle of the Holy Family. *(Light the candle for Advent II.)* Here is the candle of the shepherds. *(Light the candle for Advent III.)* Here is the candle of the wise ones. *(Light the third purple candle.)* Let's enjoy the light.

Now we come to the Mystery of Christmas. This is when the baby is born, the one we have been waiting for.

Here is the Christ Child, the Mystery of Christmas. *(Gently touch the figure of Jesus in the manger or bring him to the story.)* And here is the cow who was so surprised to find a baby in the feed box on Christmas morning. *(Gently touch the cow or bring to the story.)*

Wait. Something is missing! I wonder what it could be?

This is the Christ candle. *(Show them the white candle.)* On Christmas Eve we will light it.

Now watch. I am going to change the light. *(Gently snuff or blow out the prophet candle.)* The light that was in just one place is now spreading out. Soon it will fill up the whole room.

*(Repeat for the Holy Family candle, the shepherd candle, and the three kings candle.)* On Christmas Eve you can light all the candles.

## Godly Play Understanding Play (Part 4)

**In every Parent Page,** we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. To fully enter into Godly Play, we need to be deeply aware of what makes *real* play and what distracts or detracts from it.

In the previous Parent Page, we discovered that play is the opposite of emptiness, that real play involves fullness, connection, engagement, vitality. To build on what we've already discussed:

- Play is pleasurable.
- Play has no extrinsic goal but engages us for its own sake.
- Play happens spontaneously, energizing us instead of depleting us. It is voluntary.
- Play involves deep concentration.
- Play nourishes creativity, problem-solving, language-learning and learning social roles.

In theological language, we might say that true players are aware of God's image as the Creator within them. Play is graceful.

# Adventures in Advent Newsletters



During, Advent, we are invited to wait and prepare for the arrival of baby Jesus. These ready-made Adventures in Advent newsletters will help your families get ready by learning, creating, serving, and exploring together. The activities in the newsletters will encourage the families in your faith community to spend intentional time together this Advent season. Print each newsletter double-sided on 8.5 x 11-inch paper and hand out or mail one per week to each family, or even send each newsletter as an email attachment.



# First Week of Advent



Think of a place where your family spends time together—maybe it's the dinner table, the family room, the kitchen, or in the car. Leave this newsletter there, and read a fun fact or try an activity whenever you are in that space. Enjoy this season of waiting and preparing for the miracle of Jesus' birth—together!

## Learn Together: Advent around the World

- What is Advent like in the
- **Philippines**? Full of light!
- Beginning on December 16,
- the streets begin twinkling with
- the light of Christmas lanterns
- called paróls. These lanterns
- shine light in the darkness
- as a reminder of the star of
- Bethlehem. Initially paróls lit
- the way to Misas de Aguinaldo,
- a nine-day series of devotional
- masses. After coming home
- from mass, people would hang
- their lanterns outside the
- house.



## Create Together: At-Home Advent Wreath

### Supplies

- Pillar candles (4, blue)
- Candle plates (1 large or 4 small)
- Something green (fabric, extra branches from your Christmas tree, ribbon, etc.)
- Lighter

Make an Advent wreath to have at home, and take turns lighting the candle each week. Use the candles to mark the time of waiting during this season of hope.

1. Decide where your Advent wreath will go. It should be somewhere it doesn't have to move, like a dining table, mantel, or coffee table.
2. Place the candles on one heat-safe large plate or individual plates.
3. Work together to add green around and between the candles, placing branches or weaving fabric or ribbon. Tuck in ends. Be sure there is a safe distance between the candle wicks and any flammable material.
4. On the first Sunday of Advent, choose a family member to light the first candle. Invite someone to share something they are excited about this season as they wait for Jesus. Repeat on each of the other Sundays in Advent.
5. Extinguish the candle(s) before leaving the room.



## • Serve Together: Christmas List Flip

- Have you written your Christmas wish list yet? For many people, this is an exciting Christmas tradition. After all, everyone loves receiving gifts! Try something different this year by making a Christmas list for someone else. Imagine kids who may not receive any gifts this year. What would you want to get them?
- Brainstorm ideas together by looking online or through ads that have come in the mail. Pick something in each of these categories: something they'd want, something they'd need, something to wear, and something to read. Take a family shopping trip to find one or more of these items (take advantage of the seasonal sales!), then donate what you bought to a local toy drive.
- If you're unable to get out to shop, grab some paper to make a list of things you'd like to give away. Then grab a box, fill it with those gently used clothes, toys, books, etc. Head to your local thrift store, church, or other organization. Or if you know of a specific family or individual in need, ask if you may give directly to them.



## • Explore Together: Take a Hike

- Mary and Joseph traveled on foot (and probably a donkey) to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. This week take your family on an outdoor adventure of your own! Look up local trails and go on a hike together. While you're hiking, imagine what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem. Ask each other, "Would you rather walk or ride on a donkey? What if you were about to have a baby? How would you plan for that on your journey?" Notice things in nature, and ask, "What do the trees look like? What does the sky look like? What do you think it looked like on Mary and Joseph's journey?"





# Second Week of Advent



Think of a place where your family spends time together—maybe it's the dinner table, the family room, the kitchen, or in the car. Leave this newsletter there, and read a fun fact or try an activity whenever you are in that space. Enjoy this season of waiting and preparing for the miracle of Jesus' birth—together!

## Learn Together: Advent around the World

What is Advent like in **Mexico**? Las Posadas is a tradition that honors Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem and their search for lodging (*posadas* means accommodations). On the nine days leading up to Christmas Eve, representing the nine months of Mary's pregnancy, families take turns housing Mary and Joseph. Each night people gather in the streets, dressed as shepherds and angels. They stop at houses, ask for lodging, and are refused until they reach a designated house. Then they enter the house and join in prayer, food, song, and a star-shaped piñata. On Christmas Eve, the celebrations culminate in a midnight mass.



## Create Together: Crayon Ornaments

Use old, broken crayons (or new ones!) to create Christmas-shaped crayon ornaments. Kids can help break the crayons and fill the shapes. Adults can take care of the baking. Hang them on your tree or give them away as gifts.

### Supplies

Variety of crayons  
Small oven-safe Christmas cookie cutters or silicone baking trays with Christmas shapes  
Kabob sticks  
String  
Oven  
Baking tray

1. Preheat the oven to 230 degrees.
2. Peel wrappers off of the crayons and throw them away. If not already broken, break crayons into pieces that will fit inside your cookie cutters or baking tray slots.
3. Fill each cookie cutter or baking tray slot with crayon pieces of different colors.
4. Bake for 15 minutes . then remove from oven and immediately use a kabob stick to create a small hole at the top of each shape. Cool completely.
6. Remove crayons from cookie cutters or baking tray.
7. Thread a piece of string through each crayon. Hang on your tree during the season, then use them to color after your tree comes down!



## • Serve Together: The Great Bake-Off!

- Frosted sugar cookies, warm
- gingerbread, chocolate truffles . . .
- there's no tastier way to show love
- than with a homemade holiday
- treat. Bake your family's favorite
- Christmas goodies together. Then
- write a list of people you could
- give them to, like teachers, pas-
- tors, coaches, elderly relatives,
- and neighbors. Package them up
- in treat bags or mason jars, tie with
- colorful ribbon, and deliver your
- tasty gifts to share a little extra
- love this Advent season.



## • Explore Together: Christmas Campout

- Don't worry, this campout is all about staying warm and cozy! Set up a mini-tent or make a pillow-and-blanket fort in the living room. Everyone in the family can help! Once the fort/tent is assembled, make hot chocolate (or apple cider, tea, etc.) and snuggle into your new Christmas campsite. Take turns sharing a favorite Christmas memory, or a highlight from everyone's week. Think about Mary and Joseph under a big bright star when Jesus was born.



# Third Week of Advent



Think of a place where your family spends time together—maybe it's the dinner table, the family room, the kitchen, or in the car. Leave this newsletter there, and read a fun fact or try an activity whenever you are in that space. Enjoy this season of waiting and preparing for the miracle of Jesus' birth—together!

## Learn Together: Advent Around the World

What is Advent like in the **United Kingdom**? Beginning in 1747 in the Moravian Church in Germany, Pastor John de Watteville gave children Christingles and prayed, "Lord Jesus, kindle a flame in these children's hearts, that theirs like Thine become." The Christingle tradition reminds people of the Christian message. The orange represents the world, encircled by the red ribbon or the love and blood of Christ. While the dried fruit symbolizes God's creation, the central candle is Jesus' light, the hope he brings to the world. The tradition spread to England in the 1700s through Moravian missionaries. In 1968, the tradition saw a revival in the Church of England and The Children's Society. Many churches today have Christingle services that raise money for children's charities.



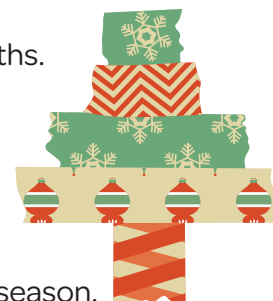
## Create Together: Washi Tape Wreaths

Little ones can practice their fine motor skills and older kids can work on their taping precision as you enjoy creating colorful Washi tape wreaths.

### Supplies

- Cardboard
- Utility knife
- Dinner plate
- Small bowl or large glass
- Washi tape (variety of Christmas colors and patterns)
- String

1. Have an adult cut out cardboard wreaths for each family member. Use a dinner plate as a guide to cut a circle out of cardboard. Use the small bowl or large glass as a guide to cut out the center circle.
2. Give each family member a cardboard wreath.
3. Tear strips of Washi tape of varying 2- to 4-inch lengths. Starting at the inner edge of the wreath, fill the cardboard with strips of tape.
4. Fill the back side, too, if desired.
5. Tie a piece of string around the wreaths, and hang them up on a wall, door, or window to celebrate the season.





## Serve Together: Partner Up

Service projects are great ways to give back to your community during Advent. They are also a great way to strengthen friendships! This week, invite another family to join you in a service project. To find a project, you could look for opportunities through ministries your church supports. You can also use websites like [volunteermatch.org](http://volunteermatch.org) to find volunteer opportunities in your zip code. Remember, serving others can be simple. Singing Christmas carols at a nursing home or helping with yard work and snow shoveling are great ways to show Christ's love. Doing these projects with new friends adds an element of community and fun!



## Explore Together: Old-Fashioned Christmas



This week we're stepping back in time for an old-fashioned Christmas. Turn on some old-timey Christmas music (who doesn't love Bing Crosby at Christmas?). Pop some popcorn, and make popcorn garlands to string around your tree. Watch a classic Christmas movie like *It's a Wonderful Life* or *White Christmas*. Make some homemade presents. Adults can share memories of Christmas from when they were growing up. Invite kids to share their favorite Christmas memories too!

# Fourth Week of Advent



Think of a place where your family spends time together—maybe it's the dinner table, the family room, the kitchen, or in the car. Leave this newsletter there, and read a fun fact or try an activity whenever you are in that space. Enjoy this season of waiting and preparing for the miracle of Jesus' birth—together!

## Learn Together: Advent around the World

- What is Advent like in **Norway**? Norwegians celebrate Advent with candles—both Adventslys and Julelys. On the four Sundays before Christmas, Norwegians light one candle each Sunday as they wait for the birth of Jesus. This is the Adventslys portion of their preparations for Christmas. As the light wanes in the Northern Hemisphere, Norwegians also decorate with many Julelys, or Christmas lights. Some people place real candles on their Christmas trees; however, electric lights are preferred. Others light a candle every night from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day. On top of Norwegian Christmas trees sits the Christmas star or Julestjerne, recalling the star of Bethlehem, which presided over Jesus' birth and led the three kings to Jesus' home.



## Create Together: Window Art

Spread Christmas cheer by decorating your windows with holiday art.

### Supplies

Glass cleaner  
Paper towels  
Window markers



1. Wash windows with glass cleaner and paper towels. Let dry.
2. Talk about what pictures or messages you want to write on your windows. Decide who will draw which images or words. Ideas include stars, candles, Christmas trees, or a nativity, and Christmas messages like "All is calm, all is bright!" or "Merry Christmas!"
3. Use window markers to decorate your windows. Be sure to follow all package instructions.
4. At night, turn on inside lights so your messages can be seen from outside your home.
5. Wash off when the season is over.

Merry  
Christmas



## Serve Together: Appreciation Post



For many, this month is a time to take a break from school or work and spend time with family. But for others, December means extra work and stress. Think of how your family could honor those working long holiday hours, like nurses, police officers, cashiers, employees at the mall, and servers at restaurants. Make some homemade thank-you cards to hand out next time you and your family go shopping, out to eat, or to the doctor. Include a coffee gift card (because who doesn't need some extra caffeine?) or gasoline gift card as an extra bonus. Give your gift with a big

smile and genuine appreciation. Jesus served those who were often overlooked, forgotten, or underappreciated. This Christmas, so can you!

## Explore Together: Lights Out!

- Christmastime can be flashy and overwhelming. This week choose a night to go lights-out!
- Put some tape over those light switches and spend a whole evening with no lights except the Christmas tree, candles, flashlights, lanterns, etc. How do you have to do your normal activities differently? How does having less light make you feel—uncomfortable or relaxed?
- Gather your family and read Luke 2:8-20. Think about the shepherds who spent every night working in dark fields, with nothing but the stars. Imagine how they felt when the angels suddenly appeared. How would you feel if after spending your whole evening in the dark, the lights turned on at once? Would you be shocked? Scared? Blinded? Share thoughts with each other as you enjoy the peace and quiet of a lights-out night.



Christmas is about children. Jerome Berryman says, "It celebrates you as a child, your children, your grandchildren (natural, adopted or befriended), and of course, God's child. Christmas evokes the wonder of children and our wonder about them."

However, for children this time of year can be a kind of slow torture. The anticipation of the avalanche of presents on Christmas Day is just too much. And it starts earlier and earlier every year. What's more, families who are over-scheduled at the best of times find these weeks before Christmas even harder.

This story offers all of us a way through....a way that gives wonder a chance to be experienced during this hectic time so, as he says, "it can ripen and produce a richness of Christmas never before realized..."

In the Church there are four weeks to get ready for Christmas called the season of Advent. Therefore, the Godly Play lesson to be used during this time has four parts. We suggest you tell one part each week leading up to Christmas Eve. The story is meant to be kept in a wooden box with a star on top, the star that led the Magi, the three kings, to the Christ Child. You might also use your Advent wreath as part of the storytelling (lighting one candle per week), and incorporate your nativity set if you own one.

#### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder if you have any favorite Christmas stories? What are your favorites? Who tells the story? Who are the listeners?
- How is this story about our family?
- What are your favorite memories of Christmas? What is most important? How do those memories impact Christmas for you today?
- What new traditions are we making with our family?
- Have you ever met a prophet? Have you ever considered the idea that someone in our own family might be a prophet?
- Have you ever been on a long journey? Was it a physical journey or some other sort of journey? Who showed you the way?
- Where will we keep this story?

We have given you materials to create your own set of Advent cards.

Week 1 Card: Advent Wreath with 1 purple candle, hand of the prophets pointing the way to Bethlehem, Bethlehem cut-out

Week 2 Card: Advent wreath with 2 purple candles, picture of Bethlehem and the road

Week 3 Card: Advent wreath with 2 purple candle and 1 pink candle, sheep and stars

Week 4 Card: Advent wreath with 3 purple candles and 1 pink candle, 3 crowns

Christmas Card: White card with Advent wreath with 3 purple candles, 1 pink candle and 1 white candle, large star

You will need a total of 1 white candle, 3 pink candles and the rest purple for the cards.

