

Advent Devotions for  
Families with Children  
Age 3 - 5th Grade



# Introduction

## **What is Advent?**

The season of Advent is a time when individuals prepare their hearts to receive Christ. Advent refers to the “coming” or “arrival” of Jesus Christ. The first Sunday of Advent occurs near or upon November 30 each year. It always includes four Sundays and varies in length from twenty-two to twenty-eight days. Advent ends with Christmas Eve.

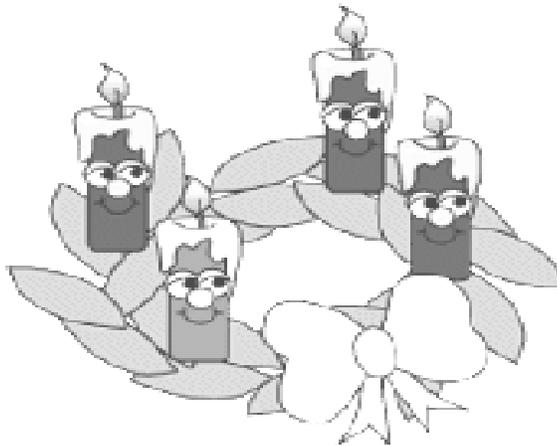
Advent can be celebrated at church and at home. This celebration can include singing a carol, reading scripture, praying, and a brief devotional reading.

## **What does it mean to prepare our hearts to receive Christ?**

Believers who desire to grow in their relationship with Christ find Advent a particularly meaningful time. Regular devotions and time in prayer help the people of God experience the presence of Christ in their heart. Christians are also waiting for Christ’s promised return to the world, called the “Second Coming.” Advent is a time of waiting, expectation and longing.

Often times when we are making or buying gifts, preparing meals, or visiting friends and family, we forget about Christ. Advent provides an opportunity for us to slow down, talk and listen to God who helps us get ready for the coming of the Christ child.

Gathering together during these special times gives us a sense of identity that comes from knowing and experiencing the presence of Christ. These kinds of gatherings become a tradition and helps children enjoy family and friends who provide stability, love and faith.



## What is the color of Advent?

The traditional color for Advent is purple which refers to the coming of the royal King, Jesus Christ, and it also refers to repentance.

Traditional candle colors in an advent wreath vary:

Some use 3 purple and 1 pink. Others use four purple candles.

Blue candles can also be used in the Advent wreath.

The Christ candle in the center of the advent wreath is white.

## What is the Advent Wreath?

An Advent wreath is a ring holding four candles decorated with greenery. The circle symbolizes God's everlasting love for God's creation and the evergreens represent Christ's gift of eternal life. The light of each candle represents the light that Christ brings to the World. On Christmas day, a white Christ candle is lit in the center of the wreath to announce the birth of Christ who is the Light of the World.

The Advent wreath can be placed in the center of your table to daily remind you of the preparation and celebration of Jesus the newborn King.

You can color the pictures as you work through the Advent devotions each week.

May the Lord bless your family as you take time to prepare for and to celebrate Jesus' birthday.



*Being a disciple of Jesus involves experiencing Jesus' love and grace. It also involves personal growth in union with Christ. Bible Study, prayer, listening to God, worship, seeking forgiveness and being forgiven, lifestyle choices, stewardship, hospitality, outreach and witnessing are actions of a follower of Jesus. Just like Jesus reached out and cared for those in physical, spiritual and emotional need, being a disciple involves sharing God's grace, love and provisions to all people in our homes, communities and world (Matthew 28:19-20).*

*Merry Christmas from Pittsburgh Presbytery Disciplemaking and Spiritual Growth*

## First Sunday of Advent PROPHECY

It is a great time to play some Christmas music and meet around the table or floor. Put the Advent Wreath in the center of the circle of friends and family.

### I. Scripture: Isaiah 40:3-5

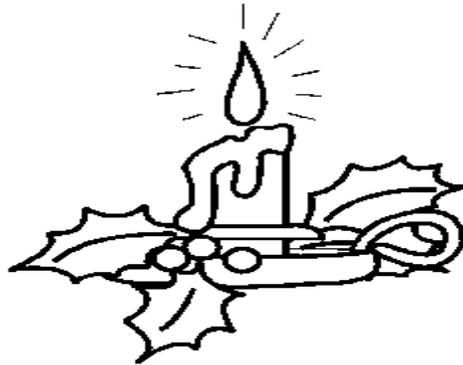
A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

### Isaiah 7:14

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

### Isaiah 9:2

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined."



### II. Light the first purple candle of **HOPE**

*The light of the prophets reminds us of the **hope** that God gives us on the way to Bethlehem.*

(When lighting candles with children, always have an adult with them. Needless to say, don't leave candles burning unattended or leave children alone in the room with burning candles)

III. Prayer: *Thank you, Jesus, for coming to earth, just like the prophets said, and for your promise to come again. Thank you, Jesus, for being our light so we know how to live. AMEN*

IV. Devotion: Today is the first Sunday of Advent. It is a time to think about what it means to celebrate Jesus and to follow Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus loves us and shows us the way out of the darkness. Jesus shows us the way to live. We have many lights around us at Christmas time to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world.

V. ♥If you have a crèche or nativity scene, you can begin to slowly get it out now. First put out the stable and talk about this special place that is being prepared for the baby. Each week you can add some of the figures and let it unfold week to week.



VI. Prayer: *God help us to stop doing so many things so we can spend time with you. Help us to see your light that shines in us and help us to see your love for the world. Help us to love others the way you love them. Amen.*

**Ways to talk about the light and the hope that it brings:**

1. Ask each person to talk about a special Christmas celebration from the past. Talk about what you are looking forward to this Christmas. How does Christmas bring you hope?
2. Share the responsibility of sending people cards this year. Give thanks for the people you are sending them to. How will these cards bring light and hope to their life?
3. Sort through your Christmas ornaments and find those that symbolize the “Light” of Jesus who is the Light of the World. What help does the light of Jesus give to you?
4. What are you hopeful for this Christmas?

**During the first week of Advent you can:**

1. Make a memory book with all the pictures you will draw during Advent.
2. Make a special ornament to take to someone in the community who lives alone, or if possible invite him/her, or a family to your advent devotions.
3. Secret Angels: focus on the gift of giving in nonmaterial ways by drawing names within your family so that each person has a secret person to do something special for during Advent. It can include gifts of time, service, prayers, special notes....but not bought gifts. A good time to reveal who the secret angels are is the 4th Sunday of Advent.
4. Read passages in scripture about giving and receiving gifts: Mt 1:18; 2:12; 6:1-4; 7:7-12: 25:35-40 (What is God’s gift to us? What do the passages say about giving? What do you feel about giving and receiving a gift?)

## Second Sunday of Advent BETHLEHEM

It is a great time to play some Christmas music and meet around the table or floor. Put the Advent Wreath in the center of the circle of friends and family.

### I. Scripture: Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (For younger children, you may also want to read this from the Children's Bible)

II. Prayer: *Lord, thank you for being with us on our way to Bethlehem. Thank you that you love us so much that you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, as a little baby. AMEN*



### III. Light the first candle of **HOPE**, and then the second candle of **LOVE**

(When lighting candles with children, always have an adult with them. Needless to say, don't leave candles burning unattended or leave children alone in the room with burning candles.)

*The light of the prophets reminds us of the **hope** that God gives us on the way to Bethlehem. The light of Bethlehem reminds us of God's **love** on our journey to Bethlehem.*

Sing or read: O Little Town of Bethlehem

“O Little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark street shineth the everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”



IV. Devotion: Today is the second Sunday of Advent. This is the day that we remember that Mary and Joseph are on the way to Bethlehem. Their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was over 70 miles. We are also on a journey. We are on our way to celebrate Christmas, and the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

The following poem can be read together:



## Little Donkey

By: Eric Boswell

Little donkey, little donkey,  
On the dusty road.  
Got to keep on plodding onwards,  
With your precious load.

Been a long time, little donkey,  
Through the winter's night.  
Don't give up now, little donkey,  
Bethlehem's in sight

Ring out those bells tonight  
Bethlehem, Bethlehem.  
Follow that star tonight,  
Bethlehem, Bethlehem.

Little donkey, little donkey,  
Had a heavy day.  
Little donkey, carry Mary safely  
on her way.

Little donkey, little donkey,  
On the dusty road.  
There are wise men waiting for a  
Sign to bring them here.

Do not falter, little donkey,  
There's a star ahead.  
It will guide you, little donkey,  
To a cattle shed.



V. ♥ If you set up the stable of your nativity set, now you can add the animals.

VI. Prayer: *Lord, help us to listen to you and learn more about you on our journey. Thank you for protecting us as we go to school and visit our friends. AMEN.*

### Ways to talk about the journey:

1. Talk about daily trips that you make. What kind of transportation do you use? What is fun and what is difficult about your daily trips? What would it be like on a donkey?
2. Think about the people you know who live far away. What would it be like to travel there by donkey? What are the different ways you can travel this year?
3. If you are traveling this Christmas, what kind of gifts can you bring that show that you are learning to follow Jesus who shows us the way to live?
4. Talk about what your faith journey with Jesus is like now. What was it like in the past?

### During the second week of Advent you can:

1. Light two candles each night at meal time. Pray that you and others will experience God's love through Jesus Christ. (read John 3:16)
2. Pray for your travels or for relatives that may be traveling this Christmas.
3. Draw a picture of the journey that Mary and Joseph took to Bethlehem.
4. Draw a picture of the journey you are going to take to see loved ones.

## Third Sunday of Advent SHEPHERDS

It is a great time to play some Christmas music and meet around the table or floor. Put the Advent Wreath in the center of the circle of friends and family.

I. Scripture: Luke 1:46-47

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."



Luke 2:8-10

And in that region there were shepherds out in the field,  
keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people."



II. Light the first candle of **HOPE**, light the second candle of **LOVE**, and light the third pink candle of **JOY**. *The light of the prophets reminds us of the **hope** that God gives us on the way to Bethlehem. The light of Bethlehem reminds us of God's **love** on our journey to Bethlehem. The light of the Shepherds reminds us not to be afraid but to be **joyful** on the way to Bethlehem.*



III. Prayer: *Lord, today we rejoice. We rejoice because our Lord and Savior, Jesus is born in Bethlehem. Fill our hearts and our days with joy. We rejoice that you are with us always. AMEN*

IV. Devotion: Today is the third Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Joy! Mary was not afraid but joyful because of the Lord was with her.

The angels comforted the frightened shepherds out on the dark hillside with the joy of the good news. Because of our relationship with Christ, we can experience joy and peace.

Sing: "Joy to the World"

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her King;

Let every heart prepare Him room,

And Heaven and nature sing,

And Heaven and nature sing,

And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing

“Joy to the World” continued  
Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and  
plains  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.



V.♥Today is the day to add Mary and Joseph to your nativity scene.

VI. Prayer: *Help us to remember the joy of knowing you and being loved by you. AMEN*

### **Ways to talk about Joy:**

1. Talk about the gifts you are giving to others and the joy it brings you when someone is excited about your gift.
2. Talk about what gift you will bring to Jesus.
3. Share something joyful that happened today or this week. Share about something that you need to pray about.
4. What are you most excited about for Christmas?

### **During the third week of Advent you can:**

1. Wrap a present to Jesus and put under the tree with a slit on top. Throughout Advent drop in pieces of paper on which you have written ways you are sharing the light of Jesus with others.
2. Make a placemat with cardboard using the Christmas cards you have received. Put clear contact paper over it and give it to a relative or neighbor as a gift.
3. Draw a picture of what you have learned this year about Christmas.
4. Each time you turn on the Christmas lights in your home say, “Christ is the light of the world, the joy of our hearts.”



## Fourth Sunday of Advent ANGELS

It is a great time to play some Christmas music and meet around the table or floor. Put the Advent Wreath in the center of the circle of friends and family.

### I. Scripture Luke 2:15-20

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.



II. Light the first candle of **HOPE**, light the second candle of **LOVE**, light the third pink candle of **JOY** and the final purple candle of **PEACE**.

*The light of the prophets reminds us of the **hope** that God gives us on the way to Bethlehem.*

*The light of Bethlehem reminds us of God's **love** on our journey to Bethlehem.*

*The light of the Shepherds reminds us not to be afraid but to be **joyful** on the way to Bethlehem. The light of the Angels reminds us of the **peace** that God gives us in Jesus Christ.*

III. Prayer: *Thank you Lord for giving us hope, love and joy even when life is difficult sometimes. AMEN*

IV. Devotion: Mary and Joseph are with the baby Jesus in the stable. The angels told the shepherds where to look for the Christ child. The Shepherds know that God gave them the good news and sent them to see the new born King.

While we have been preparing our hearts for Christmas, God has been leading us and guiding us to the true meaning of Christmas. God has come into the world to be with us so that we will experience God's grace and love.



**Sing:** Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th' angelic host proclaim  
Christ is born in Bethlehem!  
*Hark! the herald angels sing  
Glory to the new-born King!*

♥ V. Today is the day to add the shepherd and the sheep to your nativity scene.

VI. Prayer: *Lord, help us to see that you are with us always. Help us to experience the awe and wonder of Jesus' birth on Christmas day. Help us to notice those around us who know Jesus' light. Help us to share Jesus' light with others. AMEN.*

**Ways to talk about peace:**

- 1– How do you think the birth of Jesus Christ changed history?
- 2– How did the birth of Jesus change your life?
- 3– How does Jesus bring peace to your life? How does Jesus bring peace to the world?

**During the fourth week of Advent you can:**

1. Talk to the children about their own names and what they mean. Remember that Jesus has many names: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Messiah, the Lamb of God, Emmanuel (God with us).
2. Make Christmas cookies that are symbols of Christmas: baby, donkey manger, Lamb, Christmas tree, star, angel ...
4. Write a letter, poem, or song to Jesus and/or to each person in your family. Wrap it in a gift box with special (maybe white or gold) wrapping paper to be opened on Christmas Day.



## CHRISTMAS DAY CHRIST IS BORN



Today is Christmas. The day we have waited for and prepared for is finally here!  
Emmanuel: God is with us!

Scripture: John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Light the first candle and say: *The light of the prophets reminds us of the **hope** that God gives us on the way to Bethlehem.*

Light the second candle and say: *The light of Bethlehem reminds us of God's **love** on our journey to Bethlehem.*

Light the third candle and say: *The light of the Shepherds reminds us to not be afraid but to be **joyful** on the way to Bethlehem.*

Light the fourth candle and say: *The light of the Angels reminds us of the **peace** that God gives us in Jesus Christ.*

Light the Christ Candle and say: *Now we light the Christ candle honoring the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, the **One True Light**, who has come to bring light to our hearts and to our homes.*

Sing: "Silent Night, Holy Night"  
Silent Night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright  
Round yon virgin, mother and child.  
Holy infant so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent Night, holy night, shepherds  
quake at the sight;  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heavenly host sing Alleluia!  
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the  
Savior is Born.

Now is the time to add the baby Jesus to the Manger Scene!

Prayer: *Thank you God, for giving us your most precious gift, Jesus Christ! Help us to share the Good News of Jesus with others! Help us to follow Jesus through the new Year and the rest of our lives! AMEN*

\*\*\*Read Matthew 2:1-12 about the Wise Men who came to visit Jesus.



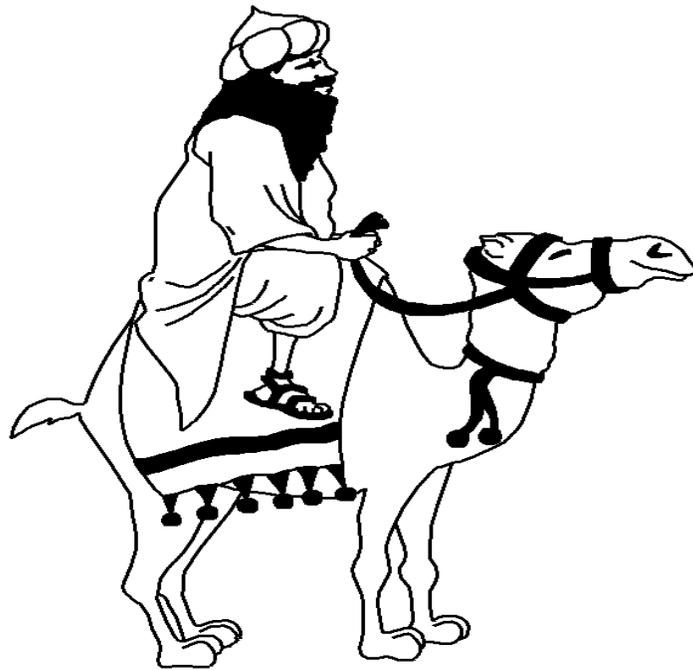
**And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David;) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.**

***Luke 2:4-5***



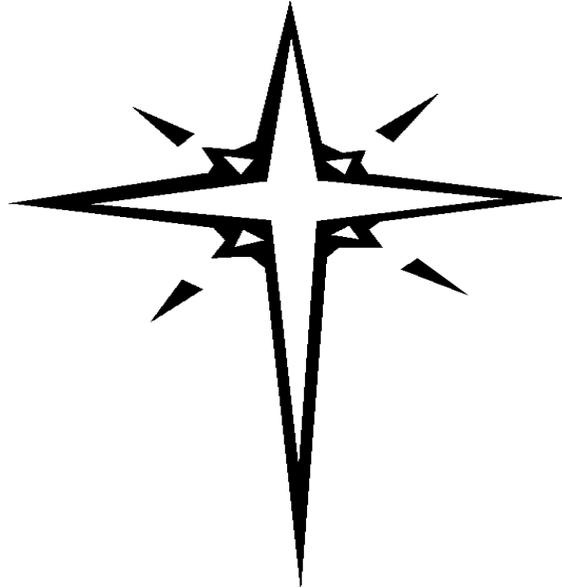
**And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.**

***Luke 2:8***



**Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,**

***Matthew 2:1***



**Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.**

***Matthew 2:2***