

# 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 together.

### 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.

