

Dear Family,

Advent is a season of preparation, a time of prayerful anticipation. The very atmosphere of Advent stirs our hearts, as we make ready to celebrate the birth of Christ.

Please utilize this resource to help your family make Jesus the focal point of the holiday season. In keeping with our children's ministry philosophy (that parents are the primary teachers of their children and that the home is the most important context for learning), we offer this Advent devotional guide as one of many tools for you to heed the instructions of Deuteronomy 6.

Set aside a little time each night to fill in the next blank in the "Advent Calendar" located at the end of this booklet. On each of the four Sundays during Advent and Christmas Eve, you will light the corresponding candles on the Advent wreath and read the devotion as a family. Activity suggestions are included for each week.

So, gather the family, bring your Bibles, and enjoy this wonderful season together with Christ.

May the Lord richly bless your family in 2010.

Pastor Brent

History of Advent

No one knows exactly when Jesus was born – what day, month or even year. Not many people know who Jesus was when He was born, and the early Christians paid no attention to the birthday of the man who was God's Son.

For the early church, Easter was the major Christian Festival. Christ's resurrection was celebrated each week and replaced the Hebrew Sabbath as the day of Christian worship. An annual celebration of Easter soon developed. It was not until later when the early Christians reflected on the words of St. Augustine (*"If our Savior had not been born, He could neither have suffered and died for our sins, nor sent His Holy Spirit"*) that it was felt necessary to establish a date for Christ's birth.

After quite a few dates had been used and changed, Pope Julius I in the year AD 350 declared that December 25 would be the date of Christmas. The celebration was not very old when the church felt the need for a period of preparation. Originally the Advent Season was the same duration as Lent – forty days. It represented the four thousand years of patient waiting on the part of the Jewish people for the promised Messiah. Advent today begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas and concludes on Christmas Eve.

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The Advent Wreath

One of the most beautiful traditions of Advent is the lighting of the Advent wreath. Materials needed to make a wreath include:

- a Styrofoam base (12 inches in diameter and at least 1 inch thick)
- 4 candles 8 inches high and 1 candle 10 inches high
- Christmas greens and any other desired ornaments

Use a table knife to cut five triangular holes in the Styrofoam base for the candles. The tallest candle goes in the center with the shorter candles spaced around the outer edge. You may want to wrap the base of each candle with a bit of floral clay and push them straight down. Use pins to attach plastic greenery or real evergreen branches (that have been treated with a fire-resistant preparation) to the base.

The names and the colors of the candles vary with the traditions. Many use pink and purple candles. Others use red and white. Choose whatever colors you like.

You may want to make your wreath as a family project at a time prior to the first Sunday of Advent. Otherwise, it can be made at the same time you light the first candle. Talk about the background information as you work together.



First Sunday of Advent – November 29, 2009



Leader: During these four weeks before Christmas, we will use our Advent wreath to prepare us for the celebration of Christmas. Each week our candles will remind us of words that will help us think of the Lord Jesus and His coming. Today we light the first candle of Advent—the candle of promise.

Scripture:

Read Ruth 1:16-17 (The passage from Ruth is taken from the Nov. 29th 9:00 AM Sunday School lesson.)

Though Ruth was not a Jew, she declared her faith in the God of Israel. God was faithful to bless Ruth with a husband, home, and family. King David, and eventually King Jesus, were descendants of Ruth. God kept his promise to send a Savior.

The fact that He used people who were not Jews to be part of the kingly line demonstrates that God's promise of salvation is for all people and all nations. (You can read Matthew 1:1-17 to see how Ruth fits into the genealogy of Christ.)

Read Matthew 28:18-20

God has promised to be with us as we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and make disciples.

Read Acts 1:8

This passage provides us a pattern for sharing the Gospel. First, the disciples had to receive the Holy Spirit themselves. Then they brought the Good News to their fellow Jews. Next they were commanded to go to Samaria, a country filled with people that the Jews thought were not

worthy of the Kingdom of God. Finally, the disciples were instructed to be a witness for Jesus to the ends of the earth.

During the four weeks of Advent, we will receive the Gospel into our own hearts, then demonstrate it to our own family, our church and community, and finally to our missionaries who are making disciples to the ends of the earth.

Meditation:

Sometimes we forget to keep a promise or someone breaks a promise to us. But God is not like that. He is always faithful to keep His promises. A long time ago, God promised to send His people a Savior who would set them free from sin and death. God made these promises directly to Adam, Eve, Abraham, and even us. In return for this free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, God asks us to live for Him. We must promise to worship Him by loving Jesus, loving others, and sharing the Good News. This week, affirm your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Preach the Gospel to your own heart.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, as we begin the Advent season, teach us the true meaning of Christmas. Each time we light the candle of promise, help us to think about your promise to send the Lord Jesus. Thank you that He came. Help us to be ready when He returns. Be with us as we live the Gospel and share the Gospel. Amen.

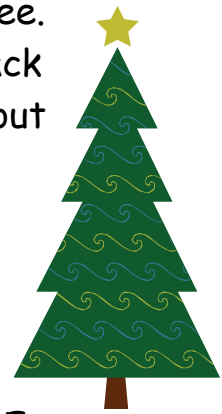
Advent Song:

O Little Town of Bethlehem

A song is suggested for each Sunday of Advent. If your family is not musical, try singing along with a CD version of the song. This song reminds us that Mary and Joseph were part of a family heritage. They were going to Bethlehem to be counted as part of the census.

Family Activity: Make a Family Tree

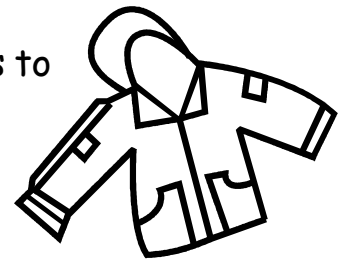
- Construct a family tree shaped like a Christmas tree. Hang an ornament with name of each person. Go back into your family history as far as you want. Talk about the faith of some of your ancestors so that your children understand that they descend from a line of other believers. This activity will help the children to understand God's amazing plan for each of them. But it will also help them to cultivate humility by recognizing that life is not all about "ME".



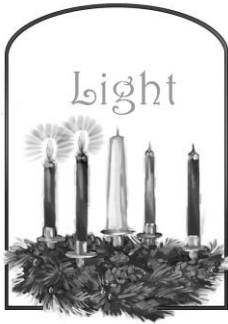
- Make plans next Sunday to go door-to-door witnessing after church. We will be sharing the Good News, passing out New Testaments, and inviting people to Advent services.



- Bring warm coats, baby clothes and blankets to the church to be distributed in Mexico.



Second Sunday of Advent – December 6, 2009



Leader: For this second week of Advent, we light two candles on our Advent wreath: the candle of promise and the candle of light (light candles).

Scripture:

Read Matthew 1:18-25 (Corresponds with the 9AM Sunday School lesson). Also, read John 1:1-14.

Meditation:

The candle of light reminds us of several things. It reminds us of the star that God placed in the sky when Jesus was born. It showed the shepherds where to go and it led the wise men as they searched for the Baby Jesus.

The candle of light also reminds us of Jesus, who is called the Light of the World. Without light, it is very hard to see where we are going. When we allow Jesus to guide our lives, He helps us to know what is right, what to do, and where to go.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank you for the light that You bring—light that helps us see our need of You and light that shows us how to live and walk. Help us to share that light with others during this Christmas season. Amen.

Advent Song:

O Come, O Come Immanuel

(Also, *This Little Light of Mine*, if you have preschoolers.)

Activity: Let Your Light Shine/The Love Gift for Jesus

Read Matthew 5:14-16

Wrap an empty box with gift wrap and cut a slot in the top. Explain to your family that this is a gift for Jesus. The greatest gift we can give Jesus is to love Him back and obey His commands. He has commanded us to love one another.

Instruct your family to perform anonymous acts of kindness for one another as a gift for Jesus. Each time a gift is performed, write it on a slip of paper or draw a picture about it and place it in the gift box for Jesus. Only you and Jesus will know about this special gift of love performed in the name of Jesus.

Third Sunday of Advent – December 13, 2009



Leader: We begin our family time this week by relighting two candles which remind us of the promise God kept when Jesus came and the light that He is. We call the third candle the candle of love. As it is lit, let's think about how much God loves us to send His son to die for our sins.

Scripture:

Matthew 2:1-12 (Corresponds to 9AM Sunday School lesson.)

Explanation and Meditation:

Wise men came from afar to honor and adore Jesus. They brought Him gifts. Jesus is God's gift to all people. But not everyone knows to come to Him, like the wise men. We must invite others to worship and adore King Jesus. We offer gifts to Jesus by giving gifts to others, in His name, and by offering the gift of eternal life through faith in Christ.

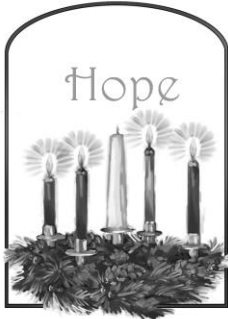
Advent Song: *We Three Kings*

Activity: *Gifts to Our Church and Community*

Think of ways to bless members of the church and neighbors in your community. For unbelievers, make sure you include a note that explains the Gospel as your motivation for blessing them.

- Bake cookies for your neighbors, especially cut-outs that can be decorated by your children.
- Deliver a gift card taped to some home-made Christmas cards.
- Come up with your own ideas as a family.

Fourth Sunday of Advent – December 20, 2009



Leader: Review the candles as you light them: The candle of promise, the candle of light, and the candle of love. Tonight we light the candle of hope. We are reminded that people all over the world need to have hope. By placing our faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, we have the hope of eternal life with Him. This is the Good News meant for all people in all nations.

Scripture: Read Matthew 2:13-23 (Corresponds to the 9AM Sunday School lesson.)

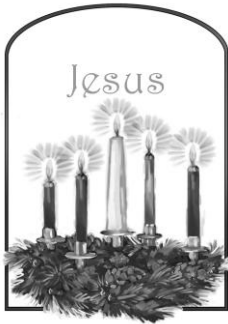
Meditation: Sadly, not everyone was excited to hear about the birth of Jesus. King Herod was jealous of the real “King of the Jews”. Even though we know many people will reject the gift of Jesus, we must be faithful to proclaim His lordship over all the earth. God was faithful to protect Joseph, Mary, and Jesus from Herod, and God has promised to be with us as we bring the Good News to all the nations.

Advent Song: *Angels We Have Heard on High*

Advent Activity:

Post-Christmas Blessing to Missionaries and Children of the World
Many families participated in Operation Christmas Child and sending Christmas gifts to our missionaries. However, the months following Christmas can be very difficult for all of us as the good feelings of the holiday season begin to fade. Pick a missionary family, and start putting together a post-Christmas care package to remind them that God is with them all year long. Also, consider “adopting” a child through World Vision, or similar mission organization.

Christmas Eve - December 24, 2009



Leader:

Light all four candles and the fifth candle in the center. The fifth, and largest candle, stands for Jesus.

Scripture:

Recite John 3:16 together.

Advent Song:

Silent Night

Dim the lights and gather around the Advent wreath to sing just before bedtime.

Prayer:

We thank you Father for sending your Son to be our King and our Savior. Make your gift be received by our hearts, by our family, by our church, by our community, and all around the world. Amen.

Advent Alphabet

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
November 29	November 30	December 1	2	3	4	5
	A	B	C	D	E	F
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
G	H	I	J	K	L	M
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
20	21	22	23	Christmas Eve 24	Christmas 25	
U	V	W	X	Y	Z	

A - Genesis 3:1-13 & Romans 5:12-14

Because of this man, sin entered the world and infected the entire human race. This begins the story of Christmas, since God promised to send a Redeemer to save mankind from sin. The man's name is _____.

B - Genesis 3:15 & Isaiah 9:6-7

God promised to send a _____ from the woman's Seed to defeat Satan (the serpent) and reign as king forever.

C - Genesis 3:16-24 & Romans 8:21

There are two words that begin with "C" for this part of the Christmas story. As part of the punishment for man's disobedience, God placed a _____ on His _____. One day, Jesus will restore the heavens and earth to perfection.

D - December 3 - Matthew 1:20; 2:12; 2:22

Today's word is something we have all had, usually while we are sleeping. God used it in the Christmas story to warn people about danger. The wise men had it and so did Joseph. If you do this during the day, people think you're lazy. At night, it's okay. Tell one another about your last one. The word is _____.

E - December 4 - Matthew 2:13

After Jesus was born and Herod wanted to kill Him, Joseph was told in one of his dreams to take Mary and Jesus to a safe country. That country was _____.

F - December 5 - Matthew 1:22

Today's word has to do with a message the prophet Isaiah wrote (Isaiah 7:15). He said these words 750 years before Jesus was born. Our word today means that the words Isaiah said were coming true. If you take a cup and you put water in it until it is all the way to the top, you have filled it full. Nothing else can be put in. That's what Matthew was saying. The words of Isaiah were filled full or all true because Jesus came. The word is _____.

G - December 6 - Luke 2:20

Our word today suggests a way we can express God's greatness. The word means to give honor, praise or admiration. The shepherds did this as they headed back to the sheep after seeing the baby Jesus. We do it when we worship and praise God. The word is _____.

H - December 7 - Matthew 2:1

This man was king when Jesus was born. He was a wicked man. His name was _____.

I - December 8 - Matthew 2:21

After Herod died, Joseph had another dream where God told him it would be safe to take Jesus and Mary back to their home. That country is _____.

J - December 9 - Luke 1:13

This person was Jesus' cousin. His mother, Elizabeth, and Jesus' mother, Mary, were friends and talked together before their babies were born. When he grew up, he preached and baptized people - in fact, he baptized Jesus. His name was _____.

K - December 10 - Matthew 2:2-3

Our word for today is not found in the Bible. The Bible tells us that they were magi, meaning they were a group of wise men. But one of our Christmas carols uses this word when it describes them. They were the three _____.

L - December 11

There are two books in the New Testament that tell the story of Jesus' birth. One was written by Matthew. The other was written by a doctor name _____.

M - December 12 - Matthew 2:11

This was an unusual baby gift! Apparently it was a nice smelling perfume and was a special gift given by three special men. Our word for today is _____.

N - December 13 - Luke 2:4

This was the hometown of Joseph and Mary. It was also the home of Jesus while he was a boy and growing up. This is where the carpenter shop was located. The town is _____.

O - December 14 - John 3:16

Our word is not found in the Christmas story but it tells the Christmas story! It tells us how special Jesus was. God had no other Son but Jesus. God gave Jesus to the world to save us and not one can ever do what he did. He was the one and _____ Son of God.

P - December 15 - Luke 2:19

The word for today means "to think about". The verse says that Mary kept all the things that were happening to Jesus in her mind and thought about them. She _____ these things in her heart.

Q - December 16 - Luke 2:46

For today's word we move ahead to when Jesus was twelve years old. He was sitting in the temple, talking with the teachers. Not only did he listen to them but He asked them _____.

R - December 17 - Matthew 1:5

This woman was married to Boaz and was the great grandmother of David. When she made a choice to follow her mother-in-law, Naomi, and go back with her to the town of Bethlehem, little did she know all that God had planned for her - including being part of Jesus' family tree! Her name was _____.

S - December 18 - Matthew 2:2

When we travel somewhere we usually follow a road map or the street signs. But not the wise men - they followed a _____.

T - December 19 - Matthew 2:27

This was home to an old lady named Anna. She lived there night and day. It was also the place where Simeon came the day Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to present Him to the Lord. It was the name of the building where people came to worship God. Our word for today is _____.

U - December 20 - Matthew 1:23

During one of Joseph's dreams an angel of the Lord told him what to name Mary's baby - Jesus. He was also called Immanuel which means "God with _____".

V - December 21 - Luke 1:27

This word describes Mary and is one of the most important things to know about Jesus being born. The angel told Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus but that God would be the Father. Mary had not been married and would not have been able to have a baby except for the miracle that God performed. Our word for today is _____.

W - December 22 - Matthew 2:11

As soon as the wise men came into the house where Jesus was, they dropped to their knees and did this. It means that we show reverence and honor. It also means that we tell God how special He is to us. Often we do this when we go to church but we can do it whenever we think of God or pray. Our word is _____.

X - December 23 - Luke 2:7

“X” marks the spot where Jesus was born! He was born a baby, but he wasn’t born in a warm bed or nursery. He really was a king, but He wasn’t born in a palace. Joseph and Mary couldn’t even find a hotel room for Him. Instead He was born where the cattle and horses were fed. He was born in a _____.

Y - December 24

Jesus came for shepherds,
He also came for kings,
He came to give us meaning
For family, life and things.

He cared for the multitude,
He also cared for the few,
He also gave His life for everyone
He died and lives for _____.

Z - December 25

This man was a priest. God gave him a very important message but he did not believe, and because of that he was not able to speak for nine months! Can you imagine how quiet our world would be if every time we doubted God, we couldn’t speak!! This man was the father of John the Baptist. His name is _____.