Date 11/30/2008 Advent 1

Focus

Advent is a time for waiting. We need to get ready for Christmas and the birth of Jesus.

Scripture

Isaiah prophecies
Luke 1

Children’s Literature Selections

Jesus, Brian Wildsmith
Shine Man, Mary Quattlebaum

Activities

It is suggested that today be an intergenerational day so that all can make an Advent wreath for their home, perhaps one could be made for the church. Distribute the family devotion booklets.

Prayers

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Collect for Advent 1 - Book of Common Prayer)

God of light, we thank you for this season of Advent - this time of waiting and watching. You are with us in our waking and in our sleeping. Bless these days as we prepare for you. Come Lord Jesus, come among us. Amen. (Adapted from Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers)
Scripture (taken from NRSV)

No particular scripture passage is selected for today due to the intergenerational activities that will take place.
Should you not wish to have the intergenerational event, it is suggested that adults read Luke 1 or selected Isaiah prophecies.

Children’s Literature Selections

These books have been chosen to accompany this curriculum.
However, there are many, many other books appropriate to the season. Please feel free to use your favorites.
See the listing of books on page 4 of this lesson.
An Intergenerational Advent Event

The first Sunday of Advent is a wonderful time for the parish family to gather together to prepare for the birth of our Savior.

The church is one of the few places in society today where all ages can gather together.

For your Advent event, plan to set up several tables in a large enough room to accommodate all.

Provide refreshments and enjoy your parish family time together.

Table One

Make an Advent Wreath for your home and for your classroom.

For each wreath you will need a circle of styrofoam, some greenery and 4 blue or purple candles and 1 white votive candle for the center. Simply insert the greenery into the foam wreath and push the colored candles in the four “corners” of the wreath. The white candle can be placed in a glass votive holder and placed in the center of the wreath. Or, you may purchase brass, etc. advent wreaths to add candles and greenery.

Another option is to use mason lid jar rings and fit a piece of styrofoam into the ring. Insert some “greenery” and then each week insert one birthday cake candle - blue are easiest to find with one white one for Christmas. Do not light the candles.

Yet another option is to have 4 glass votive holders (either colored with white candles or clear with colored candles) placed on a plate or tray with a white votive candle in the center. Greenery would be optional.

Or you make one of the wreaths that are included in this material.

Children may wish to make a wreath out of their handprints cut from green construction paper. Glue the hands overlapping into a circle. Paper “candles” can be cut from blue or purple construction paper and yellow “flames” can be taped on each week.

Table Two

Make an ornament.

The ornament can be colored using markers, colored pencils or crayons, folded and then taped together to make a house-shaped box ornament.

Table Three

Make an Advent Calendar.

You may wish to color the Christmas tree. Then using colored dots put a dot on an ornament each day during Advent. Or, you may wish to color a different ornament each day.

Table Four

There are two boxes of Super-Sculpey in your materials. This special clay is designed to be shaped and then baked in a low oven. The following week the figure can be painted using acrylic paints also provided in the materials. Obvious figures include Mary and Joseph, Baby Jesus, shepherds, 3 wisemen, camels, sheep, cow and donkey. Birds and star are good additions.

You may wish to make a creche building out of wood reclaimed from Hurricane Ike.

If you make this creche for your church, be sure to have everyone make a figure, drawing lots for Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus and 3 wisemen. There can be many shepherds and sheep, birds too. Some cultures include neighborhood figures in their creche scenes. You may want to make a figure of yourself - you are at the manger too! Follow the clay directions found on the box.
Advent Books

Elijah’s Angel, Rosen/Robinson
Gift of the Magi, O’Henry
The Glorious Impossible, Madeleine L’Engle
A Certain Small Shepherd, Rebecca Caudill
Ramona and her Father, Beverly Cleary
A Northern Nativity, William Kurelek
The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, Barbara Robinson
The Christmas Mouse, Elisabeth Wenning
A Child is Born, Elizabeth Winthrop
Christmas, Jan Pienkowski
Angels and Other Strangers, Katherine Paterson
Polar Express, Chris Van Allsburg
The Nativity, illustrated by Julie Vivas
The Shine Man, Mary Quattlebaum
The Man Who Didn’t Have Time, Arch Book
The Night the Angels Sang, Arch Book
Jesus, Brian Wildsmith
The Starlight Night, Peg Augustine (Spanish version La Noche Estrellada, Heyda Negron Perez)
It Looks a Lot Like Christmas, Peg Austine (Spanish version Ya Parece Navidad by Heyda Negron Perez)

(These and many other excellent books are available in your local, school or church library or may be purchased through any major bookseller.)
Date 12/7/2008 Advent 2

Focus

Advent is a time for waiting. We need to get ready for Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Prophets help us get ready.

Scripture

Luke 1: 26-80

Children’s Literature Selections

See resource section

Activities

Continue with the creche clay figures if you are doing this project. If there are some of the intergenerational activities that you could not do last Sunday you may wish to do those today.

Prayers

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Collect for Advent 2, Book of Common Prayer)

Thank you, God, for being with us in all our preparations. Like John the Baptist, we also prepare the way of the Lord. We pray that all would be filled with the food of this earth. Come Lord Jesus, fill us with hope and joy. Amen. (Adapted from Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers)
Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcize the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, “No, he is to be called John.” They said to her, “None of your relatives has this name.” Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, “What then will this child become?” For indeed the hand of the Lord was with him. Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from one, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him with out fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And, you child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

The story for children

Elizabeth and Zechariah lived in Judea. Zechariah was a priest in the temple there. They were getting quite old and didn’t have any children.

One day, Zechariah was in the temple, offering incense in the sanctuary. As he entered the sanctuary, he was frightened to discover an angel standing there.

The angel said, “Do not be afraid.” Your prayer has been heard. You and your wife Elizabeth will have a baby who will do some very important work for God.” Zechariah asked for a sign from the angel that this would in fact happen. The angel said that until the baby was 8 days old Zechariah would not be able to talk. Zechariah came out of the temple and the people realized that he had seen a vision and that he couldn’t talk.

When the baby was born, on the 8th day he was taken to be circumcized and named. Everyone thought that Elizabeth and Zechariah would name him Zechariah. They were surprised when Zechariah wrote on his table, “His name is John.” And then Zechariah could talk again.

John grew up and lived in the desert and told everyone that the Messiah was coming soon. When Jesus was a young man, he found his cousin John and asked him to baptize him.
For Children

The Story
Tell the story of John the Baptist’s birth.

The Wondering Questions
I wonder how Elizabeth felt when she found out that she was going to have a baby?
I wonder how Zechariah felt when he found out that Elizabeth was going to have a baby?
What do people do to get ready for the baby’s birth?
I wonder what the people thought when Zechariah couldn’t talk?

Activities
You may wish to continue some of the activities from last week.
What do you think the angel who told Zechariah that they were going to have a baby looked like?
Paint a picture of this angel.
Zechariah couldn’t talk. Play a game of charades. How does it feel to be silent?
Don’t forget to use the children’s literature selections.

For Youth

What is the role of a prophet?
Who are some of the prophets we read about in the Bible?
Do we have prophets today? What are they saying?
Find “prophet” articles in the newspaper or magazines and make a collage.
Look at some of the Advent hymns in our 1982 Hymnal. What do they say about prophets?

For Adults

Read the prayer of Zechariah in Luke 1: 68-79
This prayer is one of the canticles in Morning Prayer
How is the biblical version different from the canticle?
What Old Testament stories of prophecy and prophets come to your mind in reading this canticle or passage from Luke?

At Home this Week

A home devotion guide was prepared for this curriculum. Do try to spend some time each day using that resource and the calendar. Preparation is a good thing but it does take some work and time.
Work and time are often thought of today as onerous. Take time during this Advent season to sit back and reflect on the wonderful gift we have been given, that was promised to our forefathers.

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Date 12/14/2008

Focus

Advent is a time for waiting. We need to get ready for Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph help us get ready.

Scripture

Matthew 1: 18-24
Luke 2: 1-5

Children’s Literature Selections

See resource list

Activities

If you made the creche scene, assemble it today. If you made the creche for home, decorate a small shoe box (or similar sized box) to be the stable. Take home and assemble your creche.

Prayers

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen. (Collect for Advent 3, Book of Common Prayer)

God of hope and healing, you bring good news to all people, chasing away sadness and giving comfort and peace. Come Lord Jesus, like streams in a desert. Amen. (Adapted from Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers)
Matthew 1: 18-24

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife.

Luke 2: 1-5

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

For Children

The angel Gabriel came to Mary one day and told her that she would become the mother of God’s son, Jesus. Mary was scared and a bit confused, but she said that she would do this. She trusted in God.

The angel Gabriel came to Joseph one day and told him that Mary, to whom he was betrothed (engaged) was going to have a baby. Joseph was not too happy to hear this news and the angel told him to not be afraid, that God would be with them.

Soon after this, the Emperor Augustus wanted all the people in his kingdom to be registered in the city where their family came from. So Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem from Nazareth to register.
For Children

The Story
Tell the story of Joseph and Mary

The Wondering Questions
I wonder how Mary felt when she found out that she was going to have a baby?
I wonder how Joseph felt when he found out that Mary was going to have a baby?
What do people do to get ready for the baby’s birth?
I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt about going to Bethlehem?

Activities
The Angel Gabriel is one of the archangels and was usually the messenger for God. What do you think angels look like? Does your church have a stained glass window or a picture of Mary and Gabriel? Can you find a picture of Gabriel in a book?
Or, you may wish to make an angel ornament. Patterns are in the resource section of this curriculum.

For Youth

Do angels (in your mind) look like white, golden haired, haloed beings, or do they look different. If your church has stained glass windows, look for the angels in the windows. How do they look? If you don’t have stained glass windows, you might like to look at some famous art work depicting angels. Some information about Gabriel can be found in the resource section of this curriculum.

For Adults

There are a number of similarities in Mary’s Magnificat prayer and in the Prayer of Thanksgiving that Hannah prays after the birth of Samuel. (1 Samuel 2: 1-10). Compare and contrast the prayers and then put them next Zechariah’s prayer. What do these prayers say to us about thanksgiving, the coming of the Messiah, prophecy, willingness to do God’s will?

At Home this Week

A home devotion guide was prepared for this curriculum. Do try to spend some time each day using that resource and the calendar. Preparation is a good thing but it does take some work and time. Work and time are often thought of today as onerous. Take time during this Advent season to sit back and reflect on the wonderful gift we have been given, that was promised to our forefathers.

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Advent is a time for waiting. We need to get ready for Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Shepherds help us get ready.

Scripture

Luke 2: 1-20

Children’s Literature Selections

See the resource section for choices

Activities

Paper Bag Pageant. See resource section of this curriculum.

Prayers

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Collect for Advent 4, Book of Common Prayer)

God of Mary and Elizabeth, you fill the hungry with good things and offer mercy to the meek. Remind us that nothing is impossible with you. Come, O come, Emmanuel, God with us. Amen. (Adapted from Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers)
Scripture (taken from NRSV)

Luke 2: 1-20
In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. but the angels said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth, and lying in a manger.” And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”
When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

For Children

Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem for the census that the emperor had asked all to do. While they were in Bethlehem it came time for Mary’s baby to be born.

All of Bethlehem was filled with visitors. All the hotel rooms and inns were full. There was no place to stay! Joseph finally begged an inn-keeper to let them stay in the stable next to that inn. They put down clean straw and moved the animals and that night Mary had her baby. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger, the place where the animals’ food was placed.

Later that evening, some shepherds were watching their flocks on the hillside when all of a sudden the sky was filled with light and an angel appeared and told them of the birth of the Savior. The shepherds were afraid. Then the sky was filled with many angel voices singing praises.
The shepherds went to Bethlehem to see this baby about whom the angels sang and they worshiped Jesus.
For Children

The Story
Tell the Christmas story

The Wondering Questions
I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt when there was no place to stay?
I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt when Jesus was born?
If you had been one of the shepherds, what would you have done?

Activities
The directions for doing a “paper bag Christmas pageant” can be found in the Advent resources section. You may like to prepare for this pageant by making the costumes, etc. and presenting it to the congregation either this Sunday or next Sunday - the Sunday after Christmas.

For Youth

Find pictures of creches. How are they different? The same?
Or, you may wish to use the following Bible study for the assigned scripture today.

For Adults

If your children are presenting the pageant today, perhaps you could supply refreshments, be an enthusiastic audience and celebrate.
If you are not presenting the pageant today, you may wish to use the following Bible study for the assigned scripture today.
Choose one person to read the passage aloud. Listen for key word or phrase. Share with group.
Choose another person to read the passage aloud. Again, listening for clarification, new words or phrases. Share with the group.
Read the passage a third time. With time to allow for more detailed discussion, what does this passage say to me about how I welcome the stranger, how I trust in God, what it says to me about this season and God's wonderful gift.

At Home this Week

A home devotion guide was prepared for this curriculum. Do try to spend some time each day using that resource and the calendar. Preparation is a good thing and it does take some work and time. Work and time are often thought of today as onerous. Take time during this Advent season to sit back and reflect on the wonderful gift we have been given, that was promised to our forefathers.
Just as our regular calendars are marked by seasons, the church calendar is also marked by seasons. Advent is the first season of the church year. The Advent season begins on the Sunday nearest St. Andrew’s Day (November 30) and ends on December 24.

The church observed Easter and Lent for some time before celebrating the birth of Christ. St. Augustine said, “If our Savior had not been born, he could neither have suffered and died for our sins, nor sent his Holy Spirit. In the 4th century the church leaders decided that a period of preparation before Christmas was necessary. This season was called “Advent”. Originally, Advent lasted forty days, the same duration as Lent. It represented the 4,000 years of patient waiting on the part of the Hebrews for the promised Messiah. In the 7th century, the church shortened the season of Advent to four weeks.

Advent themes center on longing for deliverance and joyful anticipation. Advent is a season of prayer. Our hymns, the scripture readings and prayers all reflect joyful waiting and looking forward to Christ’s coming again.

This booklet is designed to provide your family with an easy devotional guide to use during the season of Advent. Using a calendar format, suggestions are given for special projects. Specific scripture passages to be read as part of your devotions for the day are found in the booklet. Families with younger children may want to paraphrase the reading for the children and then read the full scripture as their own personal devotion. A brief devotion form can be found in this booklet. You may choose to have an Advent wreath as part of your family’s devotions. Directions are given for such. Consider using these devotions at mealtime or bedtime, or any time when the whole family can be together.

The following information from Sharing our Biblical Story, by Joseph P. Russell is helpful as we begin the season of Advent. “We look backward as we prepare to celebrate the historical birth of Jesus of Nazareth at Christmas. Before that birth, people longed for the Messiah who could restore Israel to her former power. We identify with that ancient longing for restoration as we await Christ’s coming more fully into our lives each day as we open ourselves to his grace and love. These moments of discovering birth in Christ are times when we can stand with the shepherds and hear glad tidings proclaimed. We also look forward in Advent to the culmination of Christ’s kingdom, when he will return in glory to fulfill the promise of wholeness. In our acclamation during the Eucharistic Prayers we identify with this longing when we say “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”

It is our hope that this booklet will enhance your own observations and devotions of this Advent season. During this hectic, wonderful time of the year, take time to prepare for the birth of our Savior. It is very easy in this busy world to rush and bustle so much to make all the preparations that we come to Christmas Eve and find that we are spiritually not ready to welcome the Christ Child into our midst.
The Collects

**Collect for Advent 1**
Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Collect for Advent 2**
Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Collect for Advent 3**
Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

**Collect for Advent 4**
Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Collect for Christmas Day**
O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Collect for Epiphany**
O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.
# Advent Scriptures

In the Episcopal Church we follow a three year cycle of readings with special emphasis on the Gospel of Matthew in Year A, Mark in Year B and Luke in Year C. The Gospel of John is read intermittently throughout all three years.

Advent marks the beginning of a new church year and so with November 30, 2008 we begin a new year (B) with Mark being the prominent Gospel. These are the readings you will hear at the primary worship service on Sunday. We also follow a two year cycle of daily readings, designed to be read in the Daily Offices of Morning Prayer, etc. but also for your own personal reading schedule. These are listed below.

During Advent this year, a brief devotion, based on the Daily readings below, along with some artwork will appear on the [www.epicenter.org](http://www.epicenter.org) website home page. It is suggested that families with young children choose one verse of the Psalm or Gospel reading for the children’s better understanding and that the passage in its entirety be read by older members of the family. This schedule of readings can also be found in The Book of Common Prayer beginning on page 936 (Year A)

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<tr>
<td>11/30</td>
<td>Each day this week light the 1\textsuperscript{st} candle in your Advent Wreath. Talk about how hard it is to wait for something. Is it bad? Is it good to wait?</td>
<td>12/2 Make a list of happy things that have happened to your family this year. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for these times.</td>
<td>12/3 Set up your crèche per the suggestions in the devotion booklet.</td>
<td>12/4 Make a list of special ways your family can observe this season.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/7</td>
<td>Each day this week light the 1\textsuperscript{st} &amp; 2\textsuperscript{nd} candles in your Advent Wreath. Talk about how we can be people of the Light.</td>
<td>12/8 Read more of your family’s Advent book selection. Move your crèche figures if you are using the suggestions in the devotion booklet.</td>
<td>12/9 Have you felt hopeless? How did the people of God feel while awaiting the Messiah?</td>
<td>12/10 Make Christmas cards for your friends or neighbors. Take or mail them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/14</td>
<td>Each day this week light the 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} &amp; 4\textsuperscript{th} candles in your Advent Wreath.</td>
<td>12/15 Continue moving the figures toward your crèche.</td>
<td>12/16 Read more from your Advent book selection. Do you need to select another book?</td>
<td>12/17 Make a special treat for someone in your family and surprise them with it. Don’t tell them who made it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/21</td>
<td>Each day this week light the 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} &amp; 4\textsuperscript{th} candles in your Advent Wreath.</td>
<td>12/22 Figure-moving time again. We’re almost there! Call someone who is alone and wish them a merry Christmas.</td>
<td>12/23 Lie on the floor and look at your Christmas tree lights.</td>
<td>12/24 Make sure all figures are in place in your crèche, and light the Christ Candle in your wreath.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Order for Advent Devotions

Light candle(s) in Advent Wreath

Leader: Light and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. Isaiah 40:5

The Lesson: Please refer to the schedule of readings located on page 3 of this booklet

The Prayers: Use the appropriate collect for the week in Advent, followed by your own prayers.

The Lord’s Prayer
   Our Father, who are in heaven,
       hallowed be thy Name,
       thy kingdom come,
       thy will be done,
           on earth as it is in heaven.
   Give us this day our daily bread.
   And forgive us our trespasses,
       as we forgive those
           who trespass against us.
   And lead us not into temptation,
       but deliver us from evil.
   For thine is the kingdom,
       and the power, and the glory,
           for ever and ever. Amen.

You may wish to incorporate the suggested activity in the calendar at this point of your devotions.

Leader: The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. The Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace. Amen.

Extinguish the candle(s).
Advent Books

Elijah's Angel, Rosen/Robinson
Gift of the Magi, O’Henry
The Glorious Impossible, Madeleine L’Engle
A Certain Small Shepherd, Rebecca Caudill
Ramona and her Father, Beverly Cleary
A Northern Nativity, William Kurelek
The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, Barbara Robinson
The Christmas Mouse, Elisabeth Wenning
A Child is Born, Elizabeth Winthrop
Christmas, Jan Pienkowski
Angels and Other Strangers, Katherine Paterson
Polar Express, Chris Van Allsburn

(These and many other excellent books are available in your local, school or church library or may be purchased through any major bookseller.)

Advent Friends

You may like to have a special Advent friend. Place family names on slips of paper in a bowl and each draw a name. During the season of Advent do something nice for that person, unannounced and un-named. On Christmas Eve your true identity can be shared.

Soft Bed

Making a soft bed for the Christ Child is an activity that little children enjoy. Provide a small basket and a container of straw pieces. Each day during your Advent devotions encourage family members to place a bit of straw into the basket, thereby making a nice soft bed for the Christ Child for each good thing they have done that day. On Christmas Eve you may wish to place a small baby doll in the basket, representing Jesus.

The Empty Crèche

If your home crèche is such, you can put up the stable on the first Sunday of Advent and then place the figures of Mary and Joseph and the donkey far away from the stable. Each day move Mary and Joseph and the donkey nearer to the stable.

The second week of Advent you may add animals to the stable, continuing to move the holy family and transportation closer to the stable.

The third week of Advent you may place shepherds and sheep a small distance away from the stable and continue to move the holy family and donkey closer.

Finally the fourth week of Advent move the holy family into the stable. Now you may place the wise men and camels far away. On Christmas Eve, move the shepherds and sheep up to the stable; reverently place the baby Jesus in the manger. Now for the next 12 days (the 12 days of Christmas) move the wise men and camels closer and closer, finally reaching the stable on January 6, Epiphany. You can tell a bit of the story each evening.

Advent marks the beginning of the church year. During this season, your hangings in your church may be either purple or blue. You may see pictures of a rose, called the Messianic Rose in some of your hangings or vestments. This beautiful symbol depicts Isaiah 35 where it is stated that the desert shall blossom as a rose at the coming of the glory of God. The rose is also a symbol of Mary.

Inexpensive and expensive Advent calendars may be purchased. Small doors may open to reveal a scripture or a picture. Some even hold a small treat. Other Advent devotional aids can be ordered through www.candlepress.com.
Our Family’s Advent Plans

What will you do to observe the season?  You may want to make some notes for next year as well.