

A  
Kids Friendly  
Advent



Worship Together  
And More...



*This document is intended as a resource for the Church. The information it contains is not prescriptive. The Book of Order and its subordinate standards contain the Church's official rules and directions. Any perceived conflict between the information contained in this resource and the Church's Book of Order and subordinate standards is entirely unintentional.*

## INTRODUCTION:

Advent is a wonderful opportunity to fully involve children in the first half of your worship service and then follow up your activities and lesson in church with some fun Christmas crafts in your children's programme. Too many of our children, even church goers, still forget the real reason for the season. Try these activities and ideas to remind the children and families of your faith community that Advent is a time to prepare for the coming of Christ TOGETHER! A time of hope, joy, peace and love.

Enjoy!

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## Background on the Advent wreath and candles

The beginning of Advent is a time for the [hanging of the green](#), decoration of the church with evergreen wreaths, boughs, or trees that help to symbolize the new and everlasting life brought through Jesus the Christ.

**The Advent wreath** is a symbol of the beginning of the Church year. It is a circular evergreen wreath with five candles, four around the wreath and one in the centre.



The **circle of the wreath** reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end.

The **green of the wreath** speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life.

**Candles** symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son. It also reminds us that we are called to be a light to the world as we reflect the light of God's grace to others (Isa 42:6).

The **four outer candles** represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent, which themselves symbolize the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ.

The **colours of the candles** vary with different traditions, but there are usually three purple candles, and one pink candle and a white candle in the centre (or the outer candles may be red). Each Sunday of Advent one of the candles is lit, a Scripture is read, a short reading is given, and a prayer offered. Each Sunday, the previous candle is relit with the additional one.

The **first candle** is traditionally the candle of **Hope** (or prophecy). This draws attention to the anticipation of the coming of an Anointed One, a Messiah, that weaves its way through Old Testament history.

**The second candle** is the candle of **Peace**. Jesus is our peace.

**The third candle** is the candle of **Joy** - the angels sang a message of JOY!

**The fourth candle is the candle of love** - the angels announced the good news of a Savior sent to us by God because He loves us! "*For God so loved the world...*" (John 3:16-17)

The **centre candle** is white and is called the **Christ Candle**. It is traditionally lit on Christmas Day. The **central location of the Christ Candle** reminds us that the incarnation is the heart of the season, giving light to the world.

## Celebrating Advent@Home

Advent is an ideal Christian festival to be observed in the home as well as at church. In its association with Christmas, Advent is a natural time to involve children in activities at home that directly connect with worship at church and the preparation for the birth of Jesus.

An **Advent** Calendar is a way to keep children involved in the entire season. See our **Kids Friendly Advent calendar** to help children reflect and act on bringing hope, peace, joy and love to their communities.

For more ideas on encouraging families to celebrate Advent@Home see **An Advent Event** (from Highgate Presbyterian).

## INVOLVING CHILDREN IN ADVENT WORSHIP

### READINGS AND CANDLE LIGHTING

#### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

*(Readers should include at least one child and preferably more, who can read with their parent or a teenager)*



Reader 1: The things we get for Christmas will not last as long as the things we get from Christmas. We will finish our Christmas treats, get bored with our Christmas toys and grow out of our Christmas clothes. But the things we get from Christ this Christmas and always - hope, peace, joy and love - will go with us all our life.

Reader 2: Why do we light the Advent candles?

Reader 1: The first Advent candle is the candle of the prophets. It stands for Hope.

Reader 2: Jesus is our hope. He died on the cross to save us and gives us everlasting life. "The light of hope shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out."

Reader 1: We light this candle for hope (lights the first candle)

#### Prayer said by all:

Creator God, on this first Sunday in Advent you call us to waken and watch for your coming again. May we wait for Christ's coming with hope in our hearts, hope that this Christmas your kingdom will come more fully in our lives. Amen.

#### Advent Song: "A Candle is Burning" by Sandra Dean, Ottawa

(words adapted by Rev Cate Burton and Penny Merton, St Peter's Tauranga, PCANZ to make it more "Kiwi")

Tune: Away in a manger

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright;  
A candle of **Hope** in the darkest of night.  
Though troubled and worried yet we will not fear.  
Our hearts are now hopeful, for Jesus is near.

## **A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN, A MESSAGE FOR ALL**

### **FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT – Countdown to Christmas**

Can anyone tell me what special time (some call it a season) it is in church this month. It's called Advent. Advent that's a funny word hey? Has anyone heard that word before? Today is the first Sunday in Advent.

Yep we can buy Advent calendars. Has anyone here got an Advent calendar? Has yours got chocolates in it? Did you have one this morning. (Before breakfast or after breakfast?) What was the picture you opened today?

What kind of pictures are on Advent calendars? Yep there are lots of pictures to remind us of Christmas. Actually you can get Advent calendars at the Warehouse now that have the Simpsons on them or other movie characters – but they aren't the real Advent calendars!

I've got a real Advent calendar here. See it's got lots of pictures that remind us of the Christmas story (you may like to discuss how some of the pictures remind us of the Christmas story).

And see it's got numbers on it. Why do you think that is? Yes that's right, the numbers remind us how many days there are until Christmas.

Do you ever count how many days you have to go until an exciting day – like: "Only 28 days until we go to Australia for our holiday" or my Blake starts asking two months before his birthday: "How many days till my birthday now mum?" When we can't wait for something to happen we like to count the days. It's called counting down to something.

So who knows how many days it is until Christmas?

We call the time from now until Christmas Advent! Ad means "to" and "vent" means "come". It's a time when we prepare for someone very important to come. Who knows who that important person is?

Yes Jesus. The church is counting down to the day when we remember Jesus birth. And like any important event we have lots of preparations during the next four weeks. At our church we prepare for Jesus birth by sharing the story of Jesus birth in lots of ways.

You guys are preparing now for your Christmas pageant. Some of you are preparing dances, others practising your instruments.

The choir is preparing for a special Christmas Carols service.

Pauline and Amy are preparing to share the story of Jesus birth with lots of kids from our community at the Christmas Kids Club next week.

And at home we will also be doing lots of preparations. We can get very busy as we prepare for our holidays, the food for our Christmas dinner, the presents, our Christmas parties. But we need to remember not to get so busy that we forget the main reason for all the preparations. Christmas is a time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus and we thank God for the hope, peace, joy and love Jesus brings to our lives. Today we lit our first Advent candle, the candle of hope and remembered how Jesus brings hope to our lives and wants us to bring hope to others. Over the next weeks we will also light the candles of peace, joy and love.

And on Christmas day, we light the fifth and last candle. The white candle or Christ candle to remind us of the birth of Jesus and to give thanks to God for giving us his most precious gift ever.

### **Let us pray:**

Loving father we thank you that there are so many things that remind us of your son Jesus at this time of year. Christmas cards we send with our love to others. Christmas trees with a star on it, Christmas lights and decorations, presents, we give and get. We want to thank you for all of these things, but most of all for Jesus who was the best present ever. Help us all to understand how much you love every one of us, from the tiny baby to the oldest person in the world. We thank you father. Amen.

## **A "SUNDAY SCHOOL" ACTIVITY**

### **FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

The attached family Advent calendar can be printed on A3 paper (either in black and white or colour). Children can decorate it with a border and write their family name in the space provided. Laminate it (if you have a laminator) and give them instructions ie



Make an advent wreath with four candles in a ring and one in the middle.



Choose a night with your family when you will light the candle for the week and talk about how you can bring Jesus into your world.



Light the Christ candle in the middle (and all the others) on Christmas day.

## INVOLVING CHILDREN IN ADVENT WORSHIP

### READINGS AND CANDLE LIGHTING



### SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Reader 1: The things we get for Christmas will not last as long as the things we get from Christmas. We will finish our Christmas treats, get bored with our Christmas toys and grow out of our Christmas clothes. But the things we get from Christ this Christmas and always - hope, peace, joy and love - will go with us all our life.

Reader 2: Why do we light the Advent candles?

Reader 3: The first Advent candle is the candle of HOPE. Jesus is our hope. He died on the cross to save us and give us everlasting life. "The light of hope shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out."

Reader 2: We light this candle for hope (lights the first candle)

Reader 3: The second candle is the candle of John the Baptist who remembered Isaiah's prophecy of PEACE. For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulders and his name shall be called wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Jesus is our peace. His peace is deep within us, reaches out to friends and strangers and brings justice to our world.

Reader 2: We light this candle for peace

#### **Prayer said by all:**

Dear God, thank you that even though there is no special star in the sky or angels singing, there is a real sense of your peace within us at Christmas time. Thank you that you are always with us sharing in our good and bad times and giving us your peace. Amen.

**Advent Song: "A Candle is Burning" by Sandra Dean, Ottawa**  
(words adapted by Rev Cate Burton and Penny Merton, St Peter's Tauranga, PCANZ to make it more "Kiwi")  
Tune: Away in a manger

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright;  
A candle of **Hope** in the darkest of night.  
Though troubled and worried yet we will not fear.  
Our hearts are now hopeful, for Jesus is near.



A candle is burning, a candle of **Peace**;  
A beacon to signal that conflict must cease.  
For Jesus is coming to show us the way;  
A koha, a taonga is laid in the hay.

## **A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN, A MESSAGE FOR ALL**

### **SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT - Putting God First**

*You will need an empty jam jar, one LARGE marble and lots of smaller ones.*

Whose got a dance show coming up? Or a prize giving? What about a Christmas party or an end of year assembly? Who's practising for a Christmas pageant? Who needs to still do their Christmas shopping? Boy Christmas is a busy time. Sometimes we get so busy at this time of year that it's quite difficult to fit God into our lives at all. We want to but there just isn't time to do everything. It's rather like these marbles in the jar.

*(Each time someone says yes to your questions, you could give them a marble. When you have given out heaps of marbles, pass the jar around and ask them to drop all the marbles in the jar until it is nearly full, and try and put the lid on. )*

All these things we do are the marbles. Now let's try and put God in

*(put the large marble on top)*

.....Oh dear, there just isn't room for God as well.

*(pause.....)*

I know, lets see what happens if we put God in first.

*(Tip all the marbles out on to a tray so you can be seen not to lose any and put the large marble in first. Then put in the smaller ones and fill the jar completely).*

Wonderful! If you put God first in your life, then everything else will fall into place.

At Godzone last week we made something to help families remember to put God first in their lives over the next few weeks. Look here's Blake's one. It's a bit like a family Advent calendar. You may remember we looked at an Advent calendar last week. If you don't have one for your family, ask your Godzone leader for one today and you can decorate it at home and light the Advent candles with your family. It will help you to remember to make space for God during this really busy time.

So remember even when you get really busy, put God into your life first and he will help you fit all the other things in too.

## **INVOLVING CHILDREN IN ADVENT WORSHIP**

### **READINGS AND CANDLE LIGHTING**



### **THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

Reader 1: The things we get for Christmas will not last as long as the things we get from Christmas. We will finish our Christmas treats, get bored with our Christmas toys and grow out of our Christmas clothes. But the things we get from Christ this Christmas and always - hope, peace, joy and love - will go with us all our life.

Reader 2: Why do we light the Advent candles?

Reader 3: The first Advent candle is the candle of HOPE.  
Jesus is our hope. He died on the cross to save us and give us everlasting life. "The light of hope shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out."

Reader 2: We light this candle for hope (lights the first candle)

Reader 3: The second candle is the candle of PEACE.  
Jesus is our peace. His peace is deep within us, reaches out to friends and strangers and brings justice to our world.

Reader 2: We light this candle for peace.

Reader 3: The third candle is the candle of JOY.  
The miracle of Christmas is that even though there is so much sadness in the world, the joy of Christ deep within us can help us reach out to the sad, the suffering and the lonely.

Reader 2: We light this candle for JOY

### **Prayer said by all:**

Dear God, thank you that through you we can always find joy. Help us to bring joy to our world by loving others the way you taught us. Amen.

**Advent Song: "A Candle is Burning" by Sandra Dean, Ottawa**  
(words adapted by Rev Cate Burton and Penny Merton,  
St Peter's Tauranga, PCANZ to make it more "Kiwi")  
Tune: Away in a manger

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright;  
A candle of **Hope** in the darkest of night.  
Though troubled and worried yet we will not fear.  
Our hearts are now hopeful, for Jesus is near.

A candle is burning, a candle of **Peace**;  
A beacon to signal that conflict must cease.  
For Jesus is coming to show us the way;  
A koha, a taonga is laid in the hay.

A candle is burning, a candle of **Joy**;  
A warm glow to welcome brave Mary's new boy.  
New life like a koru now being unfurled.  
God's promise of joy to an expectant world.

## **A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN, A MESSAGE FOR ALL**

### **THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT – Jesus lollies and the Christmas story**

Who knows how many days it is until Christmas?

Yep it's ? days to the birthday of a very special person. Who knows who that very special person is? Yes, Jesus.

You know when a mum is going to have a new baby things get very exciting towards the end. Who can remember when their mum was going to have a new baby? Can you remember that that is the only thing that gets talked about. Everyone keeps asking "how many days now" and the family is very busy preparing for the new baby. There's the room to paint and decorate, new clothes to buy, names to choose. It's a busy time.

It's a lot like that at Christmas. We are also preparing for the birth of the baby Jesus and sometimes we can get so busy that we forget about Jesus and just think of all the things we have to do. That's why it's so important that we come to church during this busy time, so we can be reminded of the story of Jesus birth and remember how Jesus brings hope, peace, joy and love into our lives.

I have a little lolly in my hand. (show them a m&m lolly). You'll have to come really close to see it. Who can see what letter is on the lolly.

M – an M

E – an E

W – a W

3 – and now it's a 3

That's a pretty tricky lolly hey! Who knows what it's called? No it's not an m&m. It's called a Jesus lolly because it reminds us of Jesus during this very busy time.

You see M stands for another name for Jesus. What could it be? – yes M could be for Messiah or Magi or even Manger where he lay.

The E is for the East where the star shone so bright.

The 3 is for the Wisemen who came to see the baby at night.

And W is for Worship, which is what we do today.

Sp next time you go to the shops with your mum, ask her to buy you some Jesus lollies and remember the real reason for Christmas.

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL ACTIVITY**

### **THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

(We made little card baskets and had this poem printed on the bottom – we iced biscuits cut in Christmas shapes and stuck Jesus lollies onto them).



### **M&M CHRISTMAS STORY**

Before you bite your biccyy,  
check out the lolly and you will see  
The M become a W, an E and then a 3.  
They tell the Christmas story,  
It's one I'm sure you know.  
It took place in a stable a long, long time ago.  
The E is for the East,  
where the star shone oh so bright.  
The M is for the Manger,  
where the baby Jesus slept that night.  
The 3 is for the Wisemen bearing gifts,  
they say they came.  
W is for Worship, Hallelujah praise to his name.  
So eat these M&M cookies or share them with a  
friend  
And remember the spirit of Christmas and never let it end.

## **INVOLVING CHILDREN IN ADVENT WORSHIP**

### **READINGS AND CANDLE LIGHTING**

#### **FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT**



Reader 1: The things we get for Christmas will not last as long as the things we get from Christ. We will finish our Christmas treats, get bored with our Christmas toys and grow out of our Christmas clothes. But the things we get from Christ this Christmas and always - hope, peace, joy and love - will go with us all our life.

Reader 2: Why do we light the Advent candles?

Reader 3: The first Advent candle is the candle of HOPE.  
Jesus is our hope. He died on the cross to save us and give us everlasting life. "The light of hope shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out."

Reader 2: We light this candle for hope (lights the first candle)

Reader 3: The second candle is the candle of PEACE.  
Jesus is our peace. His peace is deep within us, reaches out to friends and strangers and brings justice to our world.

Reader 2: We light this candle for peace.

Reader 3: The third candle is the candle of JOY.  
Jesus is our Joy. The joy of Christ deep within us can help us reach out to the sad, the suffering and the lonely.

Reader 2: We light this candle for JOY

Reader 3: The fourth candle is the candle of LOVE.  
Jesus is our LOVE. He is with us always and loves us unconditionally through all the events in our lives – in birth and death, in joy and sorrow.

Reader 2: We light this candle for LOVE

#### **Prayer said by all:**

Dear God, thank you that you love us so much even when we turn away from you. Thank you for sending us your son Jesus to show us how to live lives of love. Help us to be aware of your love and share it with others always. Amen.

**Advent Song: "A Candle is Burning" by Sandra Dean, Ottawa**  
(words adapted by Rev Cate Burton and Penny Merton,  
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Tune: Away in a manger

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A candle of **Hope** in the darkest of night.  
Though troubled and worried yet we will not fear.  
Our hearts are now hopeful, for Jesus is near.

A candle is burning, a candle of **Peace**;  
A beacon to signal that conflict must cease.  
For Jesus is coming to show us the way;  
A koha, a taonga is laid in the hay.

A candle is burning, a candle of **Joy**;  
A warm glow to welcome brave Mary's new boy.  
New life like a koru now being unfurled.  
God's promise of joy to an expectant world.

A candle is burning, a flame strong and sure  
Reminds us that God's **Love** will always endure.  
Deep love like the ocean, steady as the tide.  
Great love which comes to us with arms open wide.

**And for Christmas day after lighting the Christ candle:**

A candle is burning, for the Christ has come.  
The fullness of God dwells in this precious one.  
A child is born who has good news to tell.  
Ihu Karaiti, Emmanuel.

**A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN, A MESSAGE FOR ALL**

**FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT – God's Christmas Present**

**Simple Supplies:** You'll need a Bible; the baby Jesus from a nativity scene, wrapped in a box as a present.

What have you been doing to get ready for Christmas? How have you decorated for Christmas at your house? Have you put up your tree yet? It's an exciting time or year, isn't it?

What's the best Christmas present you've ever given someone? What's the best Christmas present you've ever received? Do you know about the Christmas present that God gave us?

I have a present here that will remind us about God's wonderful Christmas present to us. Have a child open the wrapped box and take out the baby Jesus

figure. Show the figure to all the children. Then open your Bible to Luke 1:31. (you could print it on the PowerPoint)

The Bible says God sent Jesus as a gift to us. Luke 1:31-32 tells us what God's angel said to Mary when he first told her she was going to have a baby. Listen to what the Bible says: *"You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."*

Jesus, is the reason we celebrate Christmas every year. In the bible it also says that Jesus is a gift from God. In Romans 6:23 it says: "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Isn't that wonderful? God has given us such a precious gift in Jesus. Jesus is our way of living forever with God. That's the best gift of all! Did you ever notice that the first part of the word Christmas is Christ? That's because we're celebrating the gift of Christ!

*Give each child a present Christmas decoration.* I have a little Christmas present decoration for each of you to hang on your tree or in your room to remind you that very best gift we'll ever get is God's gift of Jesus.

**Let us pray:**

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus as a gift to us. Thank you that He loves us so much and He teaches us how to love others. Thank you for letting us celebrate Jesus' birth each year with Christmas. Help us to remember that the greatest gift we get this and every Christmas is Jesus.

## **MORE CHRISTMAS AND ADVENT CRAFTS AND ACTIVITIES**

### **14 ideas to help you create a Christmas that'll make families cheer—and make it a season to remember**

In the hustle and bustle of Christmas activities, how can you keep families together—and help them focus on the real meaning of Christmas? That's the challenge, and that's why we've gift-wrapped 14 of the best ideas to help you do just that. In this section, you'll find ideas for new crafts, events, fund-raisers, and programs to help cut down on any busyness this Christmas—and enjoy the reason for the season.

Don't wait until Christmas to open this package! You'll want to get started right now on creating a Christmas that children and families will treasure forever.

### **GINGERBREAD CRECHES**

This is a great activity for parents and preschoolers to do as part of a Christmas celebration. A crèche is a display of the nativity where Jesus was born.

Have parents save 1-pound butter boxes. Then tape the open end of each box, and slice each box in half with a wallpaper knife. This makes one box for every two children.

To make this project, you'll also need sturdy paper plates, markers, cake frosting, plastic knives, graham crackers, pretzels, coconut, animal crackers, cut-out star cookies, and E.L. Fudge cookies or cut-out people cookies. Dye the coconut yellow by shaking yellow food coloring and the coconut in a resealable plastic bag until the coconut is entirely covered. Pour out onto a flat surface to dry overnight.

Make a three-dimensional instructional board for each phase of this project, including these instructions and models glued to the board.

1. Write your name on a plate. Frost all five sides of each box, and "glue" the box to the plate with frosting. Keep the open end facing forward. Attach graham crackers to the frosted sides.
2. Add animal crackers to the inside and outside of the box and a star on top, using frosting as your glue.
3. Build a manger with a glob of frosting, pretzels, and yellow coconut (and a baby Jesus if you like).
4. Add Mary and Joseph beside the manger, using frosting as your glue.

**Sue Retzlaff, Mount Horeb, Wisconsin**



## **SOAP CARVINGS**

Give each child a bar of bath soap (Ivory soap works best) and a metal spoon. Have children gently scrape away the brand name. With a toothpick, draw a cross or a fish symbol on the brand-name side of the soap. Then have children gently and slowly scrape away everything outside the drawing. If kids cut away chunks, the soap will break.

For a gift, have kids wrap the soap in cellophane and tie it with curling ribbon. This is a great gift for people in hospitals and nursing homes. The soap can be put in baskets with other toiletries.

For another soap-making project, collect all the scrap shavings in a plastic container. Simply add a small amount of warm water to the shavings, and let kids have fun squishing the mixture between their fingers. When they've created a soft mass, add a small amount (½ cup or so per four cups of shavings) of old-fashioned oats. Roll the mixture into balls. Allow the soap to dry for two or three days, after which the soap should be easy to wrap.

**Jackie Pippin, Coconut Creek, Florida**

## **A GIFT FOR JESUS**

Have children make a big stocking with the name "Jesus" in glittery gold and silver. Have children make felt or paper hearts with their names on them. Then kids can give their "hearts" to Jesus because that's what he wants the most at Christmas.

**Susie Bratsch, Collinsville, Illinois**

## **BABY FEET CHRISTMAS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

For the Sunday after Christmas, our children stood at our sanctuary doors and passed out these keepsake announcements.

We cut 8x10-inch sheets of parchment-like paper in half lengthwise and folded them (see photo). We stamped a baby's footprint on the front of the paper. On the inside we printed "Unto Us a Child Is Born" on the first line and "Joy to the World" on the next line. After photocopying the announcements, we cut the edges of each one with deckle scissors (available at craft stores). We finished off the announcements with a raffia bow glued to the front and small holes punched at the top for hanging the announcements on a Christmas tree.

Jill Capper, Crawfordsville, Indiana

## **GIVING STATIONS**

At Christmas time, have your children help assemble gifts that can be given to less fortunate or un-churched children in your community. Set up four stations for kids to work at.

- Station 1—Have children create "Soap Carvings."
- Station 2—Have children create "Baby Feet Christmas Announcements."

- Station 3—Read a story about giving, such as *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein or *The Tale of Three Trees* by Angela Elwell Hunt. Discuss how the story is similar to or different from the Christmas story.
- Station 4—Have each child at this station pack a carved soap, an announcement, and some candy in a decorated lunch sack.

When our kids created gift bags such as these, they felt good about giving to other kids close to home—and the children who received the gifts were blessed by the treats.

**Frank and Anna Abrami, St. Petersburg, Florida**

### **TEDDY BEAR PAJAMA PARTY**

Our Teddy Bear Pajama Party for babies to kindergartners runs concurrently with an adult church event.

All our kids and staff come dressed in their pajamas with a favorite blanket, pillow, or stuffed animal. We eat chicken nuggets, macaroni and cheese, banana slices, Christmas cookies, and juice. Cut foods into bite-size pieces to avoid choking hazards.

We sing, tell the Christmas story, make a teddy bear craft, and end with a movie with the lights turned down low. This party runs about two hours. We send each child home with a goody bag, including our children's ministry brochure and a small teddy bear. Kids and parents love this event.

**Tiffini Brown, Palm Beach Gardens, Florida**

### **ADVENT EVENT**

We invited people of all ages to our Advent Event following Sunday morning worship. We provided sandwiches, vegetable and fruit platters, and beverages.

After lunch, we had each person decorate a Christian symbol ornament. My husband had previously cut out Christian symbols from white plastic foam and foam core board. I provided many different craft materials in gold and white. We had 87 people from ages 2 to 90 each create a unique ornament.

The following Sunday during worship, people came forward and hung their ornaments on one of the trees that adorns our sanctuary during the Christmas season. I've heard nothing but good feedback about this event and the creativity that took place. It was a truly spiritual endeavor.

To learn more about Christian symbol ornaments, go to [www.umcs.org/chrismons/index.htm](http://www.umcs.org/chrismons/index.htm).

**Nancy Schlecht, Ridgewood, New Jersey**

## **BABY JESUS SHOWER**

Our third-grade class had a baby shower for Baby Jesus and donated the gifts to Birthright Pregnancy Resource Center. Ahead of time, we sent invitations to each family and decorated for the baby shower.

At our shower, we had refreshments, and someone read the Christmas story from the Bible to children sitting on rugs in front of a cozy cardboard fireplace. Children brought baby gifts from a list of needs. We sang Christmas carols, and a representative from Birthright attended to accept the gifts, explain the work of her organization, and thank the children. All the families had fun and left feeling good about the true meaning of Christmas.

Marge Troilo, Bel Air, Maryland

## **DOWNTOWN CAROLERS**

To share the joy of Jesus at Christmastime and to help harried shoppers remember the reason for the season, we serenaded shoppers. Every Wednesday in December preceding Christmas, we took our children to our local grocery store and Wal-Mart to sing Christmas carols. We acquired permission from the managers, of course.

Not only did this make shoppers smile, but store employees were also blessed and looked forward to our coming. As people walked by, we gave away small candy canes with the "Candy Cane Story" attached (available at [www.cmmag.com](http://www.cmmag.com)).

**Jan MacLauchlin, Fort Plain, New York**

## **CHRISTMAS CARD PROJECT**

To raise money, have your older kids set up a "post office" in your church entrance. Encourage kids to create a schedule for everyone to work in the booth. Church members can bring Christmas cards they plan to send to other church members and can give a donation that would normally cover the cost of postage. The children receive the cards, organize them in various bundles according to church members' names, and distribute the cards at the appropriate time.

Angela Safrit, Greensboro, North Carolina

## **CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR TEACHERS**

Instead of giving Christmas gifts to our teachers, we asked our families to give items for our art and resource rooms in honor of their children's teachers. We gave teachers cards notifying them of the gifts given in their honor. We also hung a paper ornament on a silk tree with each honoree's name on it. The tree filled up quickly! The response was wonderful, and our resource rooms are now well-stocked with supplies for the year.

## **CHRISTMAS STARS**

For our children's program, we had each family decorate a star cluster. Each family wrote the parents' names on a big star. Then we hung little stars from each big star and had parents write each child's first name on a different small star.

Families decorated their stars at home, and we had them bring the stars back to Sunday school a week before our program. We hung all the stars to make a beautiful church for the Christmas season. After Christmas, we returned each star cluster to our families as keepsakes.

**Lavonne Froemming, Clintonville, Wisconsin**

## **FAMILY CHRISTMAS MUSICAL**

Instead of segregating age groups, we encouraged entire families to serve together in our Family Christmas Musical.

A family choir that included many generations sang all the songs. What a neat memory for a child to sing in a choir while sitting on his grandpa's lap!

We had a skit with intergenerational actors. Families hung ornaments on our tree while a few children read related Scripture verses. We also included a couple of people's personal stories relating to the song themes. This was a beautiful family worship experience.

The benefits of family ministry are many—especially during the holiday season. Having the entire family together for rehearsals made the musical a fun memory-maker instead of another event to crowd families' time around Christmas. It also allowed all our kids to have parts. This was a great way to celebrate Christmas.

**Amy McMunn, Temperance, Michigan**

## **TABLE TOP WALK-THROUGH**

To get an overview of our Christmas musical, we blocked characters' movements and walked through our performance long before even one child was cast. On a large table top, we marked out a somewhat-to-scale floor plan of our stage area with masking tape. Next we labeled a spice jar with the name of each character in the musical.

Then we did a walk-through, using the spice jars to fill in for the kids on our mapped-out stage. We were able to work out blocking, scenery placement, entrance and exit cues, and more—all from our kitchen table. Not only did our directors have a written copy of the information in their scripts, but they were also able to see what would be happening long before we had large groups of excited kids to work with. It was a great way to prepare and build enthusiasm for the project before us.

**Lori Salomo, Ballwin, Missouri**

## **20 IDEAS FOR CELEBRATING CHRIST'S BIRTH – Children's Ministry Magazine**

**by Christine Yount**

If you shake your Christmas stocking for new ideas to celebrate Christmas this year and nothing falls out, don't despair. Try any of these 20 new ideas to keep kids focused on the true meaning of Christmas.

### **It's a Boy!**

Have groups of children work together to create a birth announcement for Jesus—complete with a painted footprint from a baby in the nursery (get parent's permission). Photocopy two announcements for each child to take home—one to keep and one to give away.

### **I Was There**

Have groups choose different characters in the Christmas story. Then have each group write and present a drama based on that character's account. Videotape each drama and have kids take turns taking the video home to show their families.

### **Shine On**

Have each child cut out a poster board star and write his or her name on it using glow-in-the-dark paint. Tape the stars to your classroom ceiling. Turn off the lights and tell kids that just as the star pointed people to Jesus, they too can help others find the savior.

### **"The Christmas Story"**

Have preschoolers dictate to you the Christmas story. Write each sentence on a different sheet of paper—keeping it in the children's words. Then have kids illustrate each page. Put the pages together in order, put a cover on the book, and staple it together. Invite your pastor to your class for a special presentation of this book.

### **Give It Away**

Take up an offering for a special need in your community. Church of the Good Shepherd in Loveland, Colorado, donated a special offering to the building of a community amphitheater.

### **Hire an Elf**

Have kids sign up to do gift-wrapping for the staff members in your church. Staffers provide all the materials.

### **Belated Gift**

After Christmas, have kids give free housecleaning to church staff members who've put in double duty during the holiday season.

### **Operation Christmas Child**

Kids can give to less-fortunate children around the world at Christmas time. Have kids pack a shoe box with small toys, batteries and flashlights, hats, gloves, or wrapped hard candies. Then send the box and \$5 to [Samaritan's Purse](#), P.O. Box 3000, Boone, NC 28607. Deadline is November 25. Samaritan's Purse delivers gift boxes to children in countries such as Bosnia, Rwanda, and Romania. For more information, contact or call 800-353-5949.

### **Surprise Advent Boxes**

Have children fill 25 boxes with goodies such as wrapped candies, small toys, pencils, a Christmas card, handmade pictures, and a Scripture verse. Then have children wrap or decorate their boxes. Have children think of 25 people who serve in your church, such as pastors, teachers, custodians, secretaries, or committee members.

Number these names and assign the people to children. Tell parents what's going on too. On the date that corresponds to that person's number, the child delivers a surprise advent box to that person.

### **Artsy Calendars**

Assign a different month of the year to each child—assign more than one month if necessary to cover the year. Have each child draw a picture for the assigned month and sign his or her creation. Then use these drawings as the picture part of a calendar.

Photocopy the calendars and have them spiral bound. Kids can give these to their parents.

### **Book Giveaway**

Have kids bring in old books to donate to a local library or give to community children to enjoy.

### **Cupcake Tree**

Bring in one cupcake for each child in your class, green icing, decorator icing, and decorator tips. Have kids decorate cupcakes to look like themselves. Place the cupcakes in the shape of a tree and celebrate your class. Then eat!

### **Teacher Blessings**

Give each teacher a subscription to [Children's Ministry Magazine](#)—the gift that keeps on giving!

### **Angels Everywhere**

Give each child an angel ornament or an angel pin. Attach the angel to a card with this calligraphy on it: "...Your angels in heaven continually behold the face of my father who is in heaven"—Matthew 18:10.

### **Special Recognition**

Present to each teacher and classroom helper a corsage or boutonniere to wear at your services on the Sunday closest to Christmas.

### **Swaddling Quilt**

You'll need a large nativity scene at the front of your church. As people arrive for services, give each one a 4X4-inch square of sturdy white fabric. At an appointed time, provide permanent markers and have each person write on their fabric square a prayer to Jesus or a gift they want to give him. Collect the squares. During the sermon, work with volunteers to iron Stitch Witchery tape (available at fabric stores or Wal-Mart) onto the squares (allowing a 1/2 -inch overlap on each side of the squares) to make a quilt. At the end of the service, have the church sing "O Come, Let Us Adore Him" as you ceremoniously bring in the quilt and wrap baby Jesus in it.

### **Surprise Seating**

Help church members get to know each other at your Christmas dinner. Draw each one of these symbols on a different 3X5 card: a tree, a bell, an angel, a cross, a star,

and a gift. Repeat the drawings to make one card for each guest. Put one card from this set on the table at each place. Make another set of cards with one of each symbol and put these cards in a bowl. As people come to the dinner, have them draw a Christmas symbol from the bowl and then put the card back into the bowl. Tell people to find their symbols at the table and enjoy getting to know the people seated next to them during dinner.

Christine Yount's favorite holidays are Christmas—and then her kids' birthdays!

### **MY GIFT TO JESUS**

After teaching about God's gifts to us, talk about how we can give gifts to Jesus. Then have children think of something they promise to do that Jesus would really like, such as tell a friend about Jesus or pray. Have kids write gift cards: "Lord Jesus, this Christmas my gift to you is (promise). Love, (child's name.)" Have each child put his or her card in a small box, wrap it, and label it: "To Jesus. From (child's name.)" Have children take their gifts home, put them under the tree, and open them for Jesus on Christmas day.

### **ANGEL TREE PARTNERS**

Create a partnership with a church in a low-income area. Get the names, ages, sizes, interests, and Christmas wish lists of the most needy children. Write the information on angel cutouts and place them on a small Christmas tree at a central place in your church.

Church members can choose an angel and provide gifts and a package of underclothes for the needy child. Invite the children to a Christmas party with games and refreshments at your church. Then present the gifts.

Laura Soliday, Fort Worth, Texas

### **PAPER BAG STOCKINGS**

Have children make brown paper bag stockings for a crisis pregnancy center. Have children use a stocking pattern to cut out their paper stockings. Staple the two sides of each stocking together and decorate it with lace and fabric. Use appropriate fabric for all year long.

Have children take their stockings home and fill them with small baby items such as baby soap, socks, diaper cream, and teething rings. Place the returned stockings in a large decorated box and deliver the box to a crisis pregnancy center. Young mothers will deeply appreciate the children's gifts.

Barbara Rodgers, Hellam, Pennsylvania

Christmas Cheer - *Children's Ministry Magazine*, November-December, 2001

## **FOR MORE ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS IDEAS SEE:**

### **More Kids Friendly Christmas Resources:**

A Family Advent Resource – Advent@Highgate

Mary and Joseph Journey to Bethlehem

Christmas Crafts

Christmas Games and Quizzes

Sharing the Christmas Story - Sample Sunday School Lesson Plans

For the four Sundays before Advent

### **WEBSITES:**

[www.cecm.vistas.uca.org](http://www.cecm.vistas.uca.org) – they have lots of good ideas for worship, activities, crafts.

[www.childrensministry.com](http://www.childrensministry.com) – for heaps of ideas on Christmas activities and family events.

[www.sa.uca.org.au](http://www.sa.uca.org.au) – for great children's ministry ideas for Christmas