#### Opening Prayer Service

Gather

Good and gracious Father, you so loved the world that you sent your only-begotten Son to redeem us and show us how to love. Be with us now as we learn to prepare our hearts for the Incarnation by entering more deeply into the holy season of Advent. We ask this in the name of the One we await. Amen!

Listen

Isaiah 35:1-6, 10.

The wilderness and the parched land will exult; the Arabah will rejoice and bloom; like the crocus it shall bloom abundantly, and rejoice with joyful song. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God.

Strengthen hands that are feeble, make firm knees that are weak. Say to the fearful of heart: Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you.

Then the eyes of the blind shall see, and the ears of the deaf be opened; then the lame shall leap like a stag, and the mute tongue sing for joy. For waters will burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the Arabah.

And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy. They meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning flee away.

Respond

Leader:

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other, mightily and sweetly ordering all things…

All:

Come and teach us the way of prudence.

Leader:

O Adonai, and leader of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai…

All:

Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

Leader:

O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples; before you kings will shut their mouths, to you the nations will make their prayer…

All:

Come and deliver us, and delay no longer.

Leader:

O Key of David and scepter of the House of Israel; you open and no one can shut; you shut and no one can open…

All:

Come and lead the prisoners from the prison house, those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

Leader:

O Morning Star, splendor of light eternal and sun of righteousness…

All:

Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

Leader:

O King of the nations, and their desire, the cornerstone making both one…

All:

Come and save the human race, which you fashioned from clay.

Leader:

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Savior…

All:

Come and save us, O Lord our God.

Go Forth

Loving God, we look forward to celebrating the Incarnation, when your Son entered our world and became one of us. As we explore Advent today, help us to be grateful for the wondrous gifts of our Savior Emmanuel, who is truly God with us. Amen.

#### Handout #2

#### God’s Promises in Sending the Messiah

**Read each of the following passages out loud at your table.**

Isaiah 2:2-5

In days to come the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it. Many people shall come and say: “Come, let us go up to the Lord’s mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths.” For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and set terms for many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again. House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

Isaiah 9:1-6

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest, as they exult when dividing the spoils. For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, the rod of their taskmaster, you have smashed, as on the day of Midian. For every boot that tramped in battle, every cloak rolled in blood, will be burned as fuel for fire. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, upon David’s throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

Isaiah 11:1-9

But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord, and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord. Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide, but he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide fairly for the land’s afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips. Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall graze, together their young shall lie down; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the viper’s den, and the child lay his hand on the adder’s lair. They shall not harm or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea.

Isaiah 35:1-6

The wilderness and the parched land will exult; the Arabah will rejoice and bloom; like the crocus it shall bloom abundantly, and rejoice with joyful song. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. Strengthen hands that are feeble, make firm knees that are weak. Say to the fearful of heart: Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall see, and the ears of the deaf be opened; then the lame shall leap like a stag, and the mute tongue sing for joy. For waters will burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the Arabah.

Isaiah 61: 1-3

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord and a day of vindication by our God; to comfort all who mourn; to place on those who mourn in Zion a diadem instead of ashes, to give them oil of gladness instead of mourning, a glorious mantle instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of justice, the planting of the Lord to show his glory.

**Discuss the following questions in your table group. Make sure to let everyone participate.**

1. What promises is God making in these passages?
2. How did Jesus fulfill each promise?
3. How are we still benefiting from these promises, from the Messiah coming into our world over 2000 years ago?

#### Handout #3

#### Prayers for the Advent Wreath

Prayer for the First Week of Advent

*Come, Lord Jesus! Open our minds and hearts and souls as we wait for you to be born anew in our lives and in our family. Help us to experience your love in our family throughout Advent.*

Prayer for the Second Week of Advent

*Come, Lord Jesus! Bring peace and healing into our family and our world. May we hear again your own prayer—"that we may be one.” May we prepare the way for you by being generous and forgiving.*

Prayer for the Third Week of Advent

*Come, Lord Jesus! Come and stay with our family and friends and all who are dear to us. May your light shine brightly so we can see you everywhere. Help us to spread your light and joy by giving freely and happily to all we meet.*

Prayer for the Fourth Week of Advent

*Come, Lord Jesus! We hunger, we thirst, we wait for you! Come, Lord Jesus, and do not delay!*

#### Handout #4

#### Advent Calendar Ideas

###### Prepare by reading the Bible

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week One of Advent** | Isaiah 2:1-5Matthew 24:37-44 | Isaiah 63:16-17,19; & 64:2-7Mark 13:33-37 | Jeremiah 33:14-16Luke 21:25-28, 34-36 |
| **Week Two of Advent** | Isaiah 11:1-10Matthew 3:1-12 | Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11Mark 1:1-8 | Baruch 5:1-9Luke 3:1-6 |
| **Week Three of Advent** | Isaiah 35:1-6, 10Matthew 11:2-11 | Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11John 1:6-8, 19-28 | Zephaniah 3:14-18Luke 3:10-18 |
| **Week Four of Advent** | Isaiah 7:10-14Matthew 1:18-24 | 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11, 16Luke 1:26-38 | Micah 5:1-4Luke 1:39-45 |

Read the Gospel of Luke 1:39-52. Spend time thinking today: What has God done for me that I am especially thankful for?

Read Mary’s Song of Praise (The Magnificat) in Luke 1:44-57. Pray that you have the courage to approach God with humility and an openness to God’s will and spirit in your life during this Advent season.

Read the Christmas story in Luke 2:1-20.

**Jesus’ Family Tree in the Bible**

**Adam & Eve**: Genesis 3:1-24

**Noah**: Genesis 6:11—9:17

**Abraham and Sarah**: Genesis 12:1-7, 15:1-6

**Isaac**: Genesis 22:1-19

**Rebecca**: Genesis 25:19-34; and 27

**Jacob**: Genesis 28:10-22; 32:25-31

**Rachel and Leah**: Genesis 29:15-30

**Joseph**: Genesis 37:3-4, 17-36; and 50:15-21 or Genesis 37:1—45:28

**Moses**: Exodus 3:1-15; 20:1-21

**Rahab**: Joshua 2:1-21

**Joshua**: Joshua 6:1-20

**Deborah**: Judges 4:1-16

**Gideon**: Judges 7:1-8, 15-20

**Samson**: Judges 13:1-5; 15:14-17

**Ruth**: Ruth chapters 1—4

**Hannah**: Samuel 1:1-20, 24-28; 2:18-20

**Samuel**: 1 Samuel 3:1-19; 16:1-13

**David**: 1 Samuel 16:1-16

**Solomon**: 1 Kings 3:4-15

**Elijah**: 1 Kings 19:3-13; 2 Kings 2:1-5, 9-13

**Jonah**: Jonah 1:1-17; 2:10; 3:1-3

**Isaiah**: Isaiah 9:1-6 and 11:1-9

**Ezekiel**: Ezekiel 37:1-14 and 24-28

**Esther**: Esther 2:17-18; 3:8-15; 4:7-16; 7:10

**Daniel**: Daniel 1:1-4; 6:1-28; 7:13-14

**Malachi**: Malachi 4:1-6

**Elizabeth**: Luke 1:5-25

**John the Baptist**: Luke 1:57-80

**Joseph**: Matthew 1:18-25

**Mary**: Luke 1:26-38, 39-56 and 2:1-14

###### Prepare by participating in church activities

* Make Advent a time of reconciliation by forgiving and seeking forgiveness.
* Join the community in Christmas caroling.
* Find time to participate in church-sponsored service projects during Advent.
* Volunteer time to help with children’s Christmas programs.

###### Prepare by doing things with your family

* Create a Christmas decoration for a room or table in your house that is a reminder of what Christmas is really about.
* Make a religious ornament for your family Christmas tree.
* Decorate the Christmas tree.
* Create Christmas gifts of your own creating (which don’t cost a lot of money): food (cookies, bread), artwork, pottery, sewing, candles, carvings, needlepoint, etc.
* Give the gift of time by participating in service to others; help a family member, relative or friend do their Christmas shopping or wrapping; read stories to children, etc.
* Read a book about Christmas traditions around the world. Add an idea you like to your family Christmas celebration.
* Read stories of Christmas. For example, read about St. Nicholas and think of two ways you could be like St. Nick during Advent.
* Watch Christmas videos with your family (e.g., *A Christmas Carol, It’s a Wonderful Life)*.
* Play a game with your family instead of watching television tonight.
* Spend time with a younger brother, sister, or neighbor, reading, playing a game, or making a Christmas ornament.
* Give up television for a day and spend the time thinking about the kind of person that Jesus wants you to be.
* Write a note to another family member telling them what you appreciate about them.
* Ask a parent to share a story about Christmas when they were growing up.
* Write a letter to a grandparent, an aunt, or an uncle. Share with them a wish you have for their new year.

###### Prepare by praying for people.

* Pray for someone in the newspaper who is in need.
* Write a list of three people you want to pray for. Keep the list with you and pray for each person daily.
* Find a special quiet place and pray for those in need in your family, your neighborhood, and our world.
* Lead the meal prayer tonight—share something you are thankful for and ask others to do the same.
* Take ten minutes in a quiet place or on a walk and talk to God about something that is bothering you. Ask God for help.
* Write a list of things you are thankful for. Spend time saying “Thank You” to God in prayer.
* Give the gift of prayer. Write a special prayer for particular people or develop a prayer list of people you will pray for each day.
* Locate Israel and Bethlehem on a globe or world map. Pray for peace in the land and continent of Jesus’ birth.
* Take time today to sit and pray. Think about what you are thankful for and what your hopes are for the coming year.

###### Prepare by serving and caring for others.

* Shovel someone’s walk or rake up leaves in someone’s yard without being paid.
* With your allowance or personal money, purchase a gift for a child and donate it to your parish or school gift drive.
* Visit a friend or relative in a nursing home or write a Christmas letter to a resident at a nearby retirement home.
* Collect and drop off non-perishable food items at a local food pantry.
* Create a card for a child in the hospital or someone in your parish who is homebound, lonely, or sick.
* Ask a parent or older sibling how you can be of help to them today.
* Clean a part of the house without being asked or paid, just to surprise your parent.
* Help make dinner and create a special atmosphere in which to share the meal as a family.
* Collect or save money to donate to a worthy organization working to alleviate poverty, such as the local Salvation Army’s Adopt-a-Family Program during the holiday season, Catholic Relief Services, Habitat for Humanity, or the Heifer Project International. Consider giving a gift that supports the organization through the coming year.
* Donate from your “wealth”: look through your clothes for things in good shape that you will never wear again. Bundle them for delivery to a church-run thrift shop or shelter.
* Buy a gift you would personally like to have. Wrap it for distribution to someone your age at a local family shelter.
* As you watch or read today’s news reports, think about where Jesus is being born in poverty today and what you can do to help.
* Look for someone who is left out or alone at school today and spend time with them during recess or lunch break.
* Forgive a friend who hurt you and let them know they are forgiven.
* Be especially nice to someone who bothers you today.
* Give gifts that support the poor. Consider SERRV, where all of the profits go directly to those who make the crafts (800-451-4407).

#### Handout #5

#### My Advent Calendar

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **9** | **17** |
| **2** | **10** | **18** |
| **3** | **11** | **19** |
| **4** | **12** | **20** |
| **5** | **13** | **21** |
| **6** | **14** | **22** |
| **7** | **15** | **23** |
| **8** | **16** | **24 Christmas Eve**Read the story of Jesus’ birth in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2:1-20. |
|  |   | **25 Christmas Day!** Spend the day with loved ones celebrating God’s gift of Jesus. Take some time to thank God for this special day. |

#### My Advent Calendar

|  |
| --- |
| Advent Week 1 |
| Advent Week 2 |
| Advent Week 3 |
| Advent Week 4**24 Christmas Eve:** Read the story of Jesus’ birth in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2:1-20.**25 Christmas Day!** Spend the day with loved ones celebrating God’s gift of Jesus. Take some time to thank God for this special day. |

#### Handout #6 for Leaders

#### Calendar-Making Options

Preparing in advance for the calendar-making will help this activity run smoothly and meaningfully for the participants and the leaders. Choose one of the following options for creating the Advent Calendars.

###### Option 1: Construction Paper Windows

This option requires the most advance preparation. Create a construction paper calendar with 25 “windows” in which can be placed personal Advent preparation ideas.

**Supplies Needed**

* Construction paper: 12 x 18 inches
(Use Advent colors of dark blue, purple and pink.)
* Exacto knife or scissors
* Glue

**Decoration Supplies** (for use during the activity)

* Markers
* Magazines
* Used Christmas cards
* Stickers
* Glue
* Glitter

**Instructions for Creating the Calendar**

1. You will use two sheets of 12 x 18 construction paper per calendar, one for a cover and one for a back.
2. Using scissors or an exacto knife, cut 25 “Windows” spaced throughout the cover. The windows can be approximately 1″ high and 2″ wide. The size of the window opening should match the size of the blank squares on the Handout: *My Advent Calendar*. Cut the window on three sides, creating a flap at the top and a window which opens at the bottom.
3. Number the windows 1 to 25.
4. Place glue on the outside edges of the back sheet of construction paper and adhere the front “window” cover to the back sheet.

**Instructions for Participants during the Calendar Activity**

1. Select a construction paper calendar.
2. Cut your calendar ideas into squares 1-25.
3. Glue the calendar idea squares inside the corresponding “window.”
4. Decorate your calendar using the available supplies; be careful not to cover or glue down the window flaps.

###### Option 2: Poster with Post-Its

This option requires no advance preparation. Create a poster with 25 post-it notes covering the personal Advent ideas.

**Materials Needed**

* Poster boards: approximately 24″ x 36″ (one for each participant)
* Post-it notes: 2 ½″ square, multicolored—blue, purple and pink if possible (25 notes per participant)

**Decoration Supplies** (for use during activity)

* Markers
* Magazines
* Used Christmas cards
* Stickers
* Glue
* Glitter

**Instructions for Participants during Calendar Activity**

1. Select a poster and a pad of post-it notes (you will need 25 notes).
2. Cut your calendar ideas into squares 1- 25.
3. Glue the calendar notes onto the poster leaving 2″ as a border between each Advent preparation idea.
4. Cover each preparation idea with a post-it note.
5. Number the outside of the post-it note to match the corresponding number for the idea.
6. Decorate the notes and the poster—be sure not to cover or glue down the post-it notes.

Option 3: Calendar with Stickers

This option requires no advance preparation. Create a calendar which uses Christmas stickers to count off the days during Advent. Provide each participant with an envelope containing Christmas stickers to use throughout the Advent season. At the end of each day during Advent, participants will place a sticker over the corresponding idea which they have done for that day. The calendar becomes filled with holiday stickers as Christmas approaches.

**Supplies Needed**

* Packets of Christmas stickers (each participant will need 25 stickers)
* Dark blue, purple, and pink construction paper, 12″ x 18″ (one sheet for each participant).

**Decoration Suppl**ies (for use during activity)

* Markers
* Magazines
* Used Christmas cards
* Stickers, glue, and glitter

**Advent Calendar Ideas for Cutting Out**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Shovel someone’s walk or rake leaves in someone’s yard without being paid. | With your allowance or personal money, purchase a gift for a child and donate it to your parish or school gift drive.  | Visit a friend or relative in a nursing home or write a Christmas letter to a resident at a nearby retirement home. |
| Share a cheerful “Merry Christmas” with three adults you pass by today. | Collect and drop off non-perishable food items at a local food pantry. | Create a card for a child in the hospital or someone in your faith community who is homebound or sick. |
| Write down a list of three people you want to pray for. Keep the list with you and pray for each person today. | Play a game with your family, instead of watching television tonight. | Find a special quiet place and pray for those in need in your family, your neighborhood, and our world.  |
| Spend time with a younger brother, sister, or neighbor, reading, playing a game, or making a Christmas ornament. | Lead the meal prayer tonight by sharing something you are thankful for and asking others to do the same. | Ask a parent or sibling how you can be of help to them today. |
| Give up television for today and spend the time thinking about the kind of person that Jesus wants you to be. | In the Bible, read Luke 1:39-52. Spend time thinking today: What has God done for me that I am especially thankful for? | Write a note to another family member telling them what you appreciate about them. |
| Look for someone who is left out or alone at school today and spend time with them during recess or lunch break. | Ask a parent to share a story about Christmas when they were growing up. | Help a child create a list for Santa and talk to them about gifts they might ask for that don’t cost money. |
| Write a letter to a grandparent, an aunt or an uncle. Share with them a wish you have for their new year. | Take time in a quiet place or on a walk to talk to God about something that is bothering you – ask God for help. | Write down a list of things you are thankful for. Spend time saying “Thank You” to God in prayer.  |
| Create a Christmas decoration for a room or table in your house that is a reminder of what Christmas is really about. | At the library or church, read about St. Nicholas. Think of two ways you could be like St. Nick during Advent. | Clean a room in your house without being asked or paid, just to surprise your parent. |
| Help make dinner and create a special atmosphere in which to share the meal as a family.  | Forgive a friend who hurt you and let them know they are forgiven.  | Be especially nice to someone who bothers you today. |

**Instructions for Participants during Calendar Activity**

1. Select a piece of colored construction paper.
2. Cut your calendar ideas into squares 1-25.
3. Glue the calendar idea squares onto the construction paper, allowing space between each idea.
4. Decorate your calendar using the available supplies; be careful not to cover up the idea squares.
5. Select a set of Christmas stickers. Staple the envelope to the calendar keeping the flap open to allow access to the stickers.
6. At the end of each day, place a Christmas sticker over the Advent preparation idea that you have done which corresponds to that day.

#### Handout #7

#### Stories of Advent—Making Your Jesse Tree

Person Scripture Symbol

Adam and Eve Genesis 3:1-24 an apple

Noah Genesis 6:11—9:17 (or 8:21—9:17) ark or rainbow

 (or Genesis 6:5-9, 7:7-16, 8:13-17, 9:12-16)

Abraham and Sarah Genesis 12:1-7, 15:1-6 camel, tent or star

Isaac Genesis 22:1-19 ram

Rebecca Genesis 25:19-34; and 27 a well

Jacob Genesis 28:10-22 or 32: 25-31 a ladder

Rachel and Leah Genesis 29:15-30 a veil

Joseph Genesis 37:3-4 and 17-36; 50:15-21 coat of many colors

 (or Genesis 37:1—45:28)

Moses Exodus 3:1-15 bush

Exodus 20:1-21 10 Commandments (tablets)

Rahab Joshua 2:1-21 rope

Joshua Joshua 6:1-20 trumpet

Deborah Judges 4:1-16 palm tree/tent peg & mallet

Gideon Judges 7:1-8, 15-20 torch

Samson Judges 13:1-5; 15:14-17 jawbone

Ruth Ruth Chapters 1—4 anchor or grains of wheat

Hannah 1 Samuel 1:1-20, 24-28; 2:18-20 small robe

Samuel 1 Samuel 3:1-19; 16:1-13 oil

David 1 Samuel 16:1-16 stringed instrument or

slingshot or crown (for king)

Solomon 1 Kings 3:4-15 crown or scepter

Elijah 1 Kings 19:3-13; 2 Kings 2:1-5, 9-13 chariot

Jonah Jonah 1:1-17; 2:10; 3:1-3 whale

Isaiah Isaiah 9:1-6 and 11:1-9 branch or lion and lamb

Ezekiel Ezekiel 37:1-14 and 24-28 bones

Esther Esther 2:17-18; 3:8-15; 4:7-16; 7:10 crown

Daniel Daniel 1:1-4; 6:1-28; 7:13-14 lion

Malachi Malachi 4:1-6 sun

Elizabeth Luke 1:5-25 a home, angel, temple/altar

John the Baptist Luke 1:57-80 shell and water or a reed

Joseph Matthew 1:18-25 hammer or saw

Mary Luke 1:26-38, 39-56 lily

 Luke 2:1-14 manger

#### Handout #8

#### Worth Waiting For.…

**Directions**

1. Choose one event or special occasion to focus on for this activity.
2. Brainstorm and describe how you would prepare or get ready for that event. What would you do while you are waiting for the day of the event to arrive?
3. List out the actions or steps you would take to get ready for the special occasion.

Event or Special Occasion

Ways to Prepare and Things to Get Ready While Waiting

#### Handout #9

#### The Liturgical Year Seasons of the Church

The Liturgical Year is a twelve-month cycle which celebrates and retells the life and ministry of Jesus. It highlights significant people and events in the story of salvation. Celebrating the feasts and seasons of the liturgical year enables Christians to deepen their faith, discover ways to live as disciples, and celebrate Jesus’ presence in the life of the church today. The Liturgical Year includes five major seasons and begins the First Sunday of Advent.

1. **Advent: Begins the Sunday nearest November 30th and ends December 24th.** Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of Christ, when we reflect on how we might prepare to welcome Jesus into all aspects of our lives.
2. **Christmas: Begins at the vigil December 24th and lasts until the Sunday after Epiphany (January 6th).** We continue the celebration of Christ’s birth through the twelve days of Christmas. We remember the coming of the magi on Epiphany, and then the Baptism of the Lord the following Sunday. We then spend several weeks in “ordinary time” when we reflect on Jesus’ life and teaching.
3. **Lent: Begins Ash Wednesday and lasts until Holy Thursday evening.** Lent is a special time when we look at the meaning of Jesus’ life for us today. It is a time for us to consider how we might more closely follow Jesus in our life by making choices to *give up* the things that keep us from being better disciples and *give* *of* ourselves in caring for others as Jesus would. **The** **Paschal *Triduum* begins on Holy Thursday and lasts until evening prayer on Easter Sunday.** The *Triduum* focuses on the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is the three-day high point of the liturgical year when we “walk” with Jesus through his passion and resurrection.
4. **Easter: Begins Easter Sunday and lasts until Pentecost.** The celebration of the resurrection continues for fifty days until Pentecost.
5. **Ordinary Time: Begins on the Monday after the first Sunday following January 6th, and lasts until the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday.** The Tuesday before Ash Wednesday is also known as Mardi Gras. **Ordinary Time begins again on the Monday after Pentecost and lasts until the day before the First Sunday of Advent.** During Ordinary Time we hear stories of Jesus’ life and mission and explore how we can live this mission in our ordinary days.

#### Handout #10

#### Advent—Did You Know?

1. The church’s liturgical year begins with the first Sunday of Advent.
2. Advent begins on the Sunday nearest November 30th and lasts until December 24th.
3. The word Advent comes from the word *adventus* which means “coming.”
4. Advent is a season in the church year when we remember how the Word of God became human in the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, which we celebrate on Christmas. During Advent we also reflect on and celebrate how Jesus comes into our lives and is present with us every day.
5. Advent is a time of hoping and working for a change of heart. We focus on being more open to the love of God in our lives and the salvation offered through Jesus.
6. The Advent wreath is a tradition of the season. It is a symbol of our hope in Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the world. The design of the wreath symbolizes the following:
7. The circle and evergreens remind us of God’s everlasting love which has no beginning and no end.
8. The four unlit candles remind us of the four thousand years before Christ’s birth, a time of spiritual “cold and darkness” as humanity awaited the birth of the Messiah. They also represent the four weeks of Advent.
9. It is customary to use three purple and one pink candle. The purple reminds us of the need for sorrow for our sins. The pink candle reminds us of the joy and hope we share in Jesus, the Light of the World, whose birth we celebrate very soon.
10. Advent begins with the lighting of one purple candle on the First Sunday of Advent. The pink candle is lit the third week when the Advent focus shifts to the special joy of the Christmas event. The increasing light of each week reminds us that Christmas is nearer, and Christ’s presence continues to grow and brighten our lives. It also reminds us that by being Christ’s light today, we can brighten the “darkness” we find in our lives and in the world around us.