### Opening Prayer Service

##### Gather

God of hope and promise, as we enter this Advent season we ask that your calming presence be with us. Slow us down, Lord. Too often we do not have time to prepare for the Messiah’s coming. We get caught up in the busyness of the season and forget to focus on Jesus’ coming into our lives, our families, and our world. Help us to find quiet moments during Advent to reflect on this season of preparation and waiting. May your presence, O God, be felt in all of our preparations and planning. Help us to find ways to grow closer to Jesus, our Messiah, during this Advent season. We ask this in the name of the One for whom we wait. Amen.

##### Listen

Luke 3:3-6, 15-16

##### Respond

Leader: Isaiah prophesies, “They will beat their swords into ploughshares.”   
Christ is coming!

All: We await the coming of the Messiah who brings peace.

Leader: Isaiah prophesies, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Christ is coming!

All: We await the coming of the Messiah who brings light to those in darkness.

Leader Isaiah prophesies, “The blind shall see, the deaf hear, the lame work, the mute speak, and the poor lifted up.” Christ is coming!

All: We await the coming of the Messiah who brings justice and healing.

Leader: Isaiah prophesies, “A Messiah will arise from the descendants of David.”   
Christ is coming!

All: We await the coming of the Messiah who brings justice and integrity.   
Christ is coming! Christ is coming! Rejoice, rejoice!

##### Go Forth

Wake up, people of God! The Messiah is coming to dwell among us.

Prepare for the unexpected to break into our lives; be alert to the signs of the coming of God.

Look for the Light that was with God in the beginning.

Prepare a dwelling place for the Lord in your homes.

Wake up, people of God! Look for the Messiah!

Listen attentively for the coming of the Word made flesh.

Rejoice, the Messiah is coming to bring us peace and hope. Amen.

### Handout #1.

### How Do We Prepare?

*If you are participating as a family, answer the questions as a family.*

##### Our Daily Preparations

What are the things that you prepare for every day (e.g., work or school, meals, transportation, homework, meetings, sports, activities, social engagements)?

##### Our Occasional Preparation

What are the things that you prepare for occasionally (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, special projects at home or school or work, going on vacation)?

##### Our Unexpected Preparations

What are the things that you have had to prepare for that were unexpected (e.g., the sickness or death of a loved one, a visit of a friend or relative)?

##### How We Typically Prepare

What is typical about the ways that you prepare for things? (For example, do you get ready far in advance or do you wait until the last minute? Are you very organized with lists and outlines or are you more spontaneous? Does everything have to be just right or do you “cut corners?”)

##### How We Can Prepare Well

What does it take to prepare well for something? (For example, having a plan, knowing the priorities of what we are preparing for, having the time to prepare well, choosing how to prepare in the best way, knowing the resources we will need and who we should involve are ways to prepare well.)

### Handout #2.

### Who is the Messiah?

This activity focuses on learning about the Messiah through selected readings from the Advent and Christmas Lectionary.

“One of the promises God made to Abraham and his descendants, which includes us, is that God will protect God’s people. It is from this promise that the expectation of a messiah was born. The word *messiah*, like the word *Christ,* means *an anointed one*. In Old Testament times priests, kings, and prophets were all anointed. Whenever the people were suffering, whenever they were defeated by a political enemy, they expected God to send someone to save them.” (Margaret Nutting Ralph, *Preparing for the Messiah)*

##### Exploring the Old Testament Readings

Select three Scripture passages from the packet on the table.

Read each of Scripture passage aloud and ask: “What kind of Messiah are we expecting in this Scripture passage?” Highlight key words on the Scripture passage.

When you have finished all three Scripture passages, write your answers to the question, “What kind of Messiah are we expecting in these Scripture passages?”, on a piece of paper or file card. Answers should reflect what you learned from all three passages.

Share your reflections with the other families at your table.

Create a table report on newsprint that summarizes what kind of Messiah was expected in the Advent Old Testament readings. Label the newsprint, “The Messiah who was expected…”

##### Exploring the Gospel Readings

Read Matthew 4:23-25 and 11:2-11 on Handout #6 and ask “What is Jesus doing in these two Gospel passages?” Highlight key words in the Scripture passage.

Recall stories from the Gospels that illustrate when Jesus actually did these things. Think of stories that you hear at Sunday Mass or learned in educational programs that are examples of Jesus actually doing the things that are identified in the two Gospel passages above.

To help younger children recall stories from the Gospels, look at the pictures of Jesus’ actions on the handout and have them tell a story of what they think Jesus is doing in the story.

Read the following Gospel stories on Handout #6 that illustrate Jesus in action. One parent should select a story to read to young children, while the other parent and older children select their own stories to read. Be sure not to select the same story. Have each family member summarize the story he or she read and then identify what Jesus is doing in the story.

* the blind receive their sight; Matthew 9:27-31
* the lame walk: Mark 2:1-12
* the lepers are cleansed: Mark 1:40-45
* the deaf hear: Mark 7:31-37
* the dead are raised: Mark 5:22-24, 35-43
* the poor have good news brought to them: Luke 6:17-26

Share the insights from the stories as a family. Give each family member time to share his or her summary and identify what Jesus is doing in the story.

Connect the Gospel stories you have read, as a family, to the Old Testament readings and the two Gospel stories from Matthew. How do Jesus’ actions reflect the expectations of the Messiah from the Old Testament? Refer to your newsprint report from the first learning activity: “The Messiah who was expected…”

Imagine that the messengers of John the Baptist came to your family today and asked you: “Is Jesus the Messiah or should we look elsewhere?” How would your family respond? What would Jesus be doing today as the Messiah—in our community, nation, and world. Your task is to take the work of the Messiah as you read about it in Matthew 4 and 11 and the other Gospel stories, and illustrate it with examples from today.

Here are several ways that your family, as individuals and/or as a total family effort, can create your response:

* Create a poster that illustrates the work of the Messiah with photos from magazines. Identify photos that portray situations or circumstances in which you think Jesus would be involved. Be sure to label each photo with an action from Matthew 4 or 11.
* Create artwork to illustrate the work of the Messiah today, such as a picture of Jesus visiting sick people or serving the poor at a soup kitchen. Artwork can take many forms, such as pictures of Jesus’ actions today or symbols for Jesus’ actions.
* Create a comic strip to illustrate the work of the Messiah today. Parents and children should work together to create a storyline, develop characters, draw characters, and write the text.
* Create a visual advertisement for Jesus’ work today. You can use a variety of advertising methods, such as an ad in a magazine or newspaper, a poster advertisement, a billboard, a t-shirt, or other article of clothing.
* Re-write Matthew 11 for today’s audience by using the same storyline and adding contemporary examples for each of Jesus’ actions.

Share your creative project with the other families at the table.

### Handout #3.

### Searching for the Messiah Today

This activity focuses on learning about the Messiah through selected readings from the Advent and Christmas Lectionary.

“One of the promises God made to Abraham and his descendants, which includes us, is that God will protect God’s people. It is from this promise that the expectation of a messiah was born. The word *messiah*, like the word *Christ,* means *an anointed one*. In Old Testament times priests, kings, and prophets were all anointed. Whenever the people were suffering, whenever they were defeated by a political enemy, they expected God to send someone to save them.” (Margaret Nutting Ralph, *Preparing for the Messiah*)

##### Exploring the Old Testament Readings

Select one Scripture passage from the packet of Old Testament readings. Read the Scripture passage and ask: “What kind of Messiah are we expecting in this Scripture passage?” Highlight key words on the Scripture passage.

Share your reflections as a group. Begin by reading a selection from your Scripture passage and then offer your response to the question of what kind of Messiah was expected in this Scripture passage.

Create a table report on newsprint that summarizes what kind of Messiah was expected in all of the Advent Old Testament readings. Ask groups to label the newsprint, “The Messiah who was expected…”

##### Exploring the Gospel Readings

Read Matthew 4:23-25 and 11:2-11 on Handout #7. Answer the question, “What is Jesus doing in these two Gospel passages?” Highlight key words in the Scripture passage.

Recall stories from the Gospels that illustrate when Jesus actually did these things. Think of stories that you hear at Sunday Mass or learned in educational programs that are examples of Jesus actually doing the things that are identified in the two Gospel passages.

Assign one of the following Gospel stories on Handout #7 to each person in the group. Be sure that each of the six categories is covered. Have each group member summarize the story he or she read and then identify what Jesus is doing in the story.

* the blind receive their sight; Matthew 9:27-31, Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 8:22-26
* the lame walk: Mark 2:1-12,
* the lepers are cleansed: Mark 1:40-45, Luke 17:11-19
* the deaf hear: Mark 7:31-37
* the dead are raised: Mark 5:22-24, 35-43, Luke 7:11-17
* the poor have good news brought to them: Luke 6:17-26

Share the insights from each group member by moving around the group and asking for brief reports from each person.

Connect the Gospel stories you have read to the Old Testament readings and the two Gospel stories from Matthew. How do Jesus’ actions reflect the expectations of the Messiah from the Old Testament? Refer to your newsprint report from the first learning activity: “The Messiah who was expected…”

Imagine that the messengers of John the Baptist came to your group today and asked you: “Is Jesus the Messiah or should we look elsewhere?” How would your group respond? What would Jesus be doing today as the Messiah—in our community, nation, and world? Your task is to take the work of the Messiah as you read about it in Matthew 4 and 11 and the other Gospel stories and illustrate it with examples from today.

Here are several ways that your group can create your response:

* Create a resumé for the Messiah today using what you have learned from the Old Testament and Gospel readings. Imagine that Jesus had to present his credentials for the job of Messiah today. What would you put in his resumé?
* Create a ten-minute TV news report on the work of the Messiah. Develop a storyline, create scenes that you want to videotape, write interviews with people, and write your commentary.
* Re-write Matthew 11 for today’s audience by using the same storyline and adding contemporary examples for each of Jesus’ actions.
* Create a poster that illustrates the work of the Messiah with photos from magazines. Identify photos that portray situations or circumstances in which you think Jesus would be involved. Be sure to label each photo with an action from Matthew 4 or 11.
* Create artwork to illustrate the work of the Messiah today, such as a picture of Jesus visiting sick people or serving the poor at a soup kitchen. Artwork can take many forms, such as drawing pictures of Jesus’ actions today, creating posters in the style of movie posters, creating symbols of Jesus’ actions on paper or in clay. You could even create pictures that look like modern stained-glass windows to illustrate Jesus’ actions.
* Create a comic strip to illustrate the work of the Messiah today. Work together to create a storyline, develop characters, draw characters, and write the text.
* Create a visual advertisement for Jesus’ work today. You can use a variety of advertising methods, such as an ad in a magazine or newspaper, a poster advertisement, a billboard, a t-shirt, or other article of clothing.

Share your creative project with other tables.

### Handout #4.

### Images of the Messiah

This activity focuses on learning about the Messiah through selected readings from the Advent and Christmas Lectionary.

“One of the promises God made to Abraham and his descendants, which includes us, is that God will protect God’s people. It is from this promise that the expectation of a messiah was born. The word *messiah*, like the word *Christ,* means *an anointed one*. In Old Testament times priests, kings, and prophets were all anointed. Whenever the people were suffering, whenever they were defeated by a political enemy, they expected God to send someone to save them.” (Margaret Nutting Ralph, *Preparing for the Messiah*)

##### Reflecting on Personal Images of the Messiah

Take a moment for quiet meditation on your personal images of Jesus as the Messiah. Close your eyes and relax. Call to mind all that you have learned about Jesus Christ from the Scriptures, from family and friends, from your ethnic tradition, from your participation in church life. Ask yourself, “Who is the Messiah for me?” What images or understandings come to mind? Capture this in a key word or phrase or draw a picture or symbol.

Share your image or understanding of Jesus with the group, and then discuss the two reflection questions as a group.

##### Exploring Old Testament Prophecies from the Advent and Christmas Lectionary

Select one Scripture passage from the packet of Old Testament readings. Read the Scripture passage and ask: “What kind of Messiah are we expecting in this Scripture passage?” Highlight key words on the Scripture passage.

Share your reflections as a group. Begin by reading a selection from your Scripture passage and then offer your response to the question of what kind of Messiah was expected in this Scripture passage.

Create a table report on newsprint that summarizes what kind of Messiah was expected in all of the Advent Old Testament readings. Ask groups to label the newsprint, “The Messiah t was expected…”

##### Exploring Jesus Actions in the Gospels

Read Matthew 4:23-25 and 11:2-11 (Third Sunday of Advent-A) on Handout #7, and ask “What is Jesus doing in these two Gospel passages?” Highlight key words in the Scripture passage.

Share your responses to the question as a group.

Recall stories from the Gospels that illustrate when Jesus actually did these things. As a group identify specific Gospel stories of Jesus actually doing the things that are identified in Matthew 4 and 11.

Assign one of the following Gospel stories on Handout #7 to each person in the group. Be sure that each of the six categories is covered. Have each group member summarize the story he or she read and then identify what Jesus is doing in the story.

* the blind receive their sight; Matthew 9:27-31, Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 8:22-26
* the lame walk: Mark 2:1-12,
* the lepers are cleansed: Mark 1:40-45, Luke 17:11-19
* the deaf hear: Mark 7:31-37
* the dead are raised: Mark 5:22-24, 35-43, Luke 7:11-17
* the poor have good news brought to them: Luke 6:17-26

Share the insights from each group member by moving around the group and asking for brief reports from each person.

##### Reflecting on the Gospel Images of the Messiah

Take a moment to read these reflections on Matthew 11 as found on Handout #4.

John Donohue in *Hearing the Word of God—Reflections on the Sunday Readings Year A* offers these reflections on Matthew 11 and the other Lectionary readings for the Third Sunday of Advent:

“Resonating through the readings today are messages of hope for people almost three millennia ago, for people at the beginning of the first millennium, and for people today. Amidst the turmoil of internal injustice and invasion by the Assyrians, Isaiah proclaims: “Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication . . . he comes to save you.” James exhorts his community to faithful waiting (patience) for the coming of the Lord, and an imprisoned John the Baptist wonders whether his life’s hope is to be fulfilled, “Are you the one who is to come or should we look for another?”.

“Especially powerful and poignant is the picture of John, the second figure of expectation for Advent. John, the spirit-possessed prophet who, like Amos and Isaiah, castigated the religions leaders of his day, proclaimed the coming wrath of God, and pointed to one coming even stronger than he, sits now in Herod Antipas’ prison awaiting death, because he confronted with God’s word the powerful and violent people of his day. John wonders if his life was worthwhile and ask his disciples to go to Jesus and ask if he really is the awaited stronger one.

“Jesus’ answer is as much a challenge to John as is his life to us today. Jesus is not the stronger one who will usher in the day of wrath and winnow the wheat and chaff, but the one whose deeds give us the most profound hopes of Isaiah: the blind see the beauty of a dawn; the deaf hear the song of the birds; the lame jump; lepers rejoin their families; the poor receive good news that God is on their side (Isaiah 26:19; 29:18-19; 35:6, 61:1). John, who lived proclaiming God’s word, must now wait for death sustained by faith and hope in the that word.” (p. 9)

Mary Birmingham (*Word and Worship Workbook for Year A)* offers these insights on Matthew 11, when she writes:

“What a character, this John! He was in prison. Had he been stupid enough to stand for the truth? Surely he had to know what it would cost him! Was he a fool? Where were all his friends? He sat there alone. Did he wonder if it had all been a hoax? Was he depressed? Why did he ask the question: “Are you the One?” Didn’t he already know the answer? He baptized Jesus, didn’t he? Was he expecting a different kind of messiah? Did Jesus throw him off guard? Rather than give easy answers, Jesus sent word back to John that demanded the same response from John that he asks from us today. Jesus told John to observe the signs and figure it out for himself. The blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the poor have the good news preached to them. Of course John would know that these were the very things the scriptures of old foretold as evidence of the reign of God. God’s wonderful works! God’s marvelous deeds! Truly the reign of God was in his midst—in *our* midst. There is always enough evidence to proclaim the reign of God, but there is also always a fragment or a piece of ambiguity that demands that we accept the good news on faith. Who and where are the signs of God’s reign in our modern world: the blind, the deaf, lame, dead, and the poor? Do we recognize the signs, or are we blind to them?” (p. 69)

How do Jesus’ actions reflect the expectations of the Messiah from the Old Testament? Refer to your report from the Old Testament readings: “The Messiah that was expected . . .” Discuss this as a group.

How do the images of the Messiah in Matthew 4 and 11 compare and contrast with your own personal images of the Messiah? What is affirming? What is challenging? What would you change or add?

What impact might your learning have on your relationship with Jesus Christ?

##### Bringing the Messiah to the 21st Century

Imagine that the messengers of John the Baptist came to your group today and asked you: “Is Jesus the Messiah or should we look elsewhere?” How would your group respond? What would Jesus be doing today as the Messiah—in your community, nation, and world. Your task is to take the work of the Messiah as you read about it in Matthew 4 and 11 and the other Gospel stories and illustrate it with examples from today.

Discuss the focusing question as a group and summarize your thoughts. Prepare a report to share with other groups.

Consider developing a creative project to capture your thinking. Here are several examples:

* Create a resumé for the Messiah today using what you have learned from the Old Testament and Gospel readings. Imagine the Jesus had to present his credentials for the job of Messiah today. What would you put in his resumé?
* Re-write Matthew 11 for today’s audience by using the same storyline and adding contemporary examples for each of Jesus’ actions.
* Create artwork to illustrate the work of the Messiah today. Artwork can take many forms, such as drawing pictures of Jesus actions today, creating posters in the style of movie posters, creating symbols of Jesus’ actions on paper or in clay. You could even create pictures that look like modern stain glass windows to illustrate Jesus’ actions.

Share your report and/or creative project with other tables.

### Handout #5.

### Old Testament Advent Readings

##### Isaiah 2:1-5 (First Sunday of Advent-A)

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

In days to come    the mountain of the Lord’s house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.   
Many peoples shall come and say,  
‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’  
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.   
He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
and their spears into pruning-hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,

neither shall they learn war any more.

##### Jeremiah 33:14-16 (First Sunday of Advent-C)

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’

##### Isaiah 11:1-10 (Second Sunday of Advent-A)

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.   
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.   
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;   
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.   
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.   
The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.   
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den.   
They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples;

the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

##### Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8, 12-13, 17 (Second Sunday of Advent-A)

Give the king your justice, O God,  
   and your righteousness to a king’s son.   
May he judge your people with righteousness,  
   and your poor with justice.   
May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,  
   and the hills, in righteousness.   
May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,  
   give deliverance to the needy,  
   and crush the oppressor.

In his days may righteousness flourish  
   and peace abound, until the moon is no more.   
May he have dominion from sea to sea,  
   and from the river to the ends of the earth.

For he delivers the needy when they call,  
   the poor and those who have no helper.   
He has pity on the weak and the needy,  
   and saves the lives of the needy.   
From oppression and violence he redeems their life;

May his name endure forever,  
   his fame continue as long as the sun.  
May all nations be blessed in him;   
   may they pronounce him happy.

##### Psalm 85: 9-14 (Second Sunday of Advent-B)

Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,  
   that his glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;  
   righteousness and peace will kiss each other.   
Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,  
   and righteousness will look down from the sky.   
The Lord will give what is good,  
   and our land will yield its increase.   
Righteousness will go before him,  
   and will make a path for his steps.

##### Isaiah 35:1-6, 10 (Third Sunday of Advent-A)

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
   the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
   and rejoice with joy and singing.  
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
   the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
   the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,  
   and make firm the feeble knees.   
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
   ‘Be strong, do not fear!  
Here is your God.  
   He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.  
   He will come and save you.’

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
   and the ears of the deaf unstopped;   
then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
   and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.  
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
   and streams in the desert;

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
   and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
   they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
   and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

##### Psalm 146:6-10 (Third Sunday of Advent-A)

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
   whose hope is in the Lord their God,   
who made heaven and earth,  
   the sea, and all that is in them;  
who keeps faith forever;   
who executes justice for the oppressed;  
   who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;   
   the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.  
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;  
   the Lord loves the righteous.   
The Lord watches over the strangers;  
   he upholds the orphan and the widow,  
   but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

The Lord will reign forever,  
   your God, O Zion, for all generations.  
Praise the Lord!

##### Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11 (Third Sunday of Advent-B)

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 oppressed,  
   to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
   and release to the prisoners;   
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor,  
   and the day of vengeance of our God;  
   to comfort all who mourn;

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
   my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
   he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
   and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.   
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
   and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise  
   to spring up before all the nations.

##### Isaiah 9:1-6 (Christmas, Mass at Midnight—ABC)

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.   
The people who walked in darkness  
   have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
   on them light has shined.   
You have multiplied the nation,  
   you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
   as with joy at the harvest,  
   as people exult when dividing plunder.   
For the yoke of their burden,  
   and the bar across their shoulders,  
   the rod of their oppressor,  
   you have broken as on the day of Midian.   
For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
   and all the garments rolled in blood  
   shall be burned as fuel for the fire.   
For a child has been born for us,  
   a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
   and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
   Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

##### Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13 (Christmas, Mass at Midnight—ABC)

O sing to the Lord a new song;  
   sing to the Lord, all the earth.   
Sing to the Lord, bless his name;  
   tell of his salvation from day to day.   
Declare his glory among the nations,  
   his marvelous works among all the peoples.   
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;  
   let the sea roar, and all that fills it;   
   let the field exult, and everything in it.  
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy   
   before the Lord; for he is coming,  
   for he is coming to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world with righteousness,  
   and the peoples with his truth.

##### Isaiah 52:7-10 (Christmas, Mass during the Day—ABC)

How beautiful upon the mountains  
   are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,  
who brings good news,  
   who announces salvation,  
   who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’   
Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,  
   together they sing for joy;  
for in plain sight they see  
   the return of the Lord to Zion.   
Break forth together into singing,  
   you ruins of Jerusalem;  
for the Lord has comforted his people,  
   he has redeemed Jerusalem.   
The Lord has bared his holy arm  
   before the eyes of all the nations;  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
   the salvation of our God.

### Handout #6.

### Searching for the Messiah in the Gospels

#### Part 1.

##### Matthew 4:23-25

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

##### Matthew 11:2-11 (3rd Sunday of Advent-A)

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.’

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,  
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
   who will prepare your way before you.”   
Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

#### Part 2.

##### The Blind Receive their Sight: Matthew 9:27-31

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, ‘Have mercy on us, Son of David!’ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then he touched their eyes and said, ‘According to your faith let it be done to you.’ And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, ‘See that no one knows of this.’ But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district.

##### The Lame Walk: Mark 2:1-12

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ‘Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, ‘Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven”, or to say, “Stand up and take your mat and walk”? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he said to the paralytic— ‘I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.’ And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’

##### Lepers Are Cleansed: Mark 1:40-45

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, ‘If you choose, you can make me clean.’ Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I do choose. Be made clean!’ Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’ But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

##### The Deaf Hear: Mark 7:31-37

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’, that is, ‘Be opened.’ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’

##### The Dead are Raised: Mark 5:22-24, 35-43

Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, ‘My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.’ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?’ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, ‘Do not fear, only believe.’ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, ‘Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.’ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha cum’, which means, ‘Little girl, get up!’ And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

##### The Poor Have Good News Brought to Them: Luke 6:17-26

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

‘Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

‘Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

‘Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you[\*](javascript:void(0);) on account of the Son of Man. 23Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

‘But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

‘Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

‘Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

‘Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

### Handout #7.

### Searching for the Messiah in the Gospels

#### Part 1.

##### Matthew 4:23-25

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

##### Matthew 11:2-11 (3rd Sunday of Advent-A)

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.’

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,  
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
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Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

#### Part 2.

##### The Blind Receive their Sight: Matthew 9:27-31

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, ‘Have mercy on us, Son of David!’ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then he touched their eyes and said, ‘According to your faith let it be done to you.’ And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, ‘See that no one knows of this.’ But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district.

##### The Blind Receive their Sight: Matthew 20:29-34

As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. There were two blind men sitting by the roadside. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, ‘Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!’ The crowd sternly ordered them to be quiet; but they shouted even more loudly, ‘Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!’ Jesus stood still and called them, saying, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, let our eyes be opened.’ Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they regained their sight and followed him.

##### The Blind Receive their Sight: Mark 8:22-26

They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, ‘Can you see anything?’ And the man looked up and said, ‘I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.’ Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Then he sent him away to his home, saying, ‘Do not even go into the village.’

##### The Lame Walk: Mark 2:1-12

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ‘Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, ‘Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven”, or to say, “Stand up and take your mat and walk”? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he said to the paralytic— ‘I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.’ And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’

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##### Lepers Are Cleansed: Luke 17:11-19

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ When he saw them, he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, ‘Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ Then he said to him, ‘Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.’

##### The Deaf Hear: Mark 7:31-37

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’, that is, ‘Be opened.’ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’

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Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, ‘My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.’ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?’ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, ‘Do not fear, only believe.’ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, ‘Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.’ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha cum’, which means, ‘Little girl, get up!’ And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

##### The Dead are Raised: Luke 7:11-17

Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother’s only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, ‘Young man, I say to you, rise!’ The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet has risen among us!’ and ‘God has looked favorably on his people!’ This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

##### The Poor Have Good News Brought to Them: Luke 6:17-26

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

‘Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

‘Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

‘Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you[\*](javascript:void(0);) on account of the Son of Man. 23Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

‘But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

‘Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

‘Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

‘Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

### Handout #8.

### Advent Calendar or Advent Chain

Making an Advent Calendar or Advent Chain is a great way to prepare for Christ’s coming at Christmas. It reminds us of the spirit of the Advent season—a time of waiting and making room for the Christ child to be born among us.

#### Advent Chain

To create an Advent Chain, cut a sheet of colored construction paper (purple or pink) into four strips of about 3 inches by 8.5 inches. You will need 24 strips to write on (#25 is Christmas). Use the Advent Calendar Ideas to create each individual strip. Then use glue or tape, connect the two ends into links, threading each link into another, forming a chain. Each day of December read and follow the directions on the appropriate link.

#### Advent Calendar

For younger children:

1. Using the *Advent Calendar Ideas*, select a variety of possible things that the children can do. Ask the children to help you find ways that they can prepare for Jesus’ coming.
2. In each of the four boxes on Handout 8c, My Advent Calendar, ask the children to write down at least one thing they will do that week to prepare for Jesus’ coming. Help them to answer the question, *This week I will…*
3. Give them Christmas stickers so that they can put a sticker next to each idea that they do on their Advent calendar.

For older children through adults:

1. Read the variety of ideas on Handout 8b, Advent Calendar Ideas. Brainstorm other ways that they can prepare for Jesus’ coming.
2. Select 23 ideas from the handout or your own creations.
3. Place each idea chosen into a box on Handout 8c, My Advent Calendar. (Boxes 24 and 25 are already provided on the calendar.)
4. Complete the Calendar based on the option you have selected from *Calendar Options*.

#### Calendar-Making Options

Choose one of the following options for creating the Advent Calendars.

##### Option 1: Construction Paper Windows

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

**Supplies Needed**

* Construction paper: 12 x 18 inches. Use Advent colors of dark blue, purple and pink.
* Exacto knife or scissors
* Glue
* Markers
* Magazines
* Used Christmas cards
* Stickers
* Glitter

**Instructions for Creating the Calendar**

1. 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

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

**Instructions for Participants doing 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

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

**Instructions for Participants doing 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 and staple the envelope to the calendar keeping the flap open to allow access to the stickers.

**To use Calendar and Count-off Days**

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 #8.

### Advent Calendar Ideas

##### Prepare by reading the Scriptures.

* Read about the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, in the Sunday Lectionary readings.

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

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

* Make Advent a time of reconciliation by participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
* 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, such as a Christmas pageant.

##### 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 an ornament for your family Christmas tree.
* Decorate the Christmas tree.
* Create Christmas gifts of your own making (which don’t cost a lot of money): food (cookies, bread), artwork, pottery, sewing, candles, carvings, needlepoint, etc.
* Give the gift of time and service to others (hours helping others); helping a family member, relative or friend do their Christmas shopping or wrapping; reading 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, such as *A Christmas Carol* or *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 today 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.
* Help make dinner and create a special atmosphere in which to share the meal as a family.
* Research the symbolism of the Christmas tree and share what you discovered with your family.

##### Prepare by praying for people.

* Pray for someone in the newspaper who is in need.
* Write down a list of three people you want to pray for. Keep the list with you and pray for each person today.
* 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 down 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 people, 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 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.
* Follow Jesus’ command to pray for those who persecute you. Think about someone who has harmed you. Pray for that person.

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

* With your allowance or personal money, purchase a gift for a child—donate it to your parish or school gift drive.
* Visit a friend or relative in a nursing home or write a Christmas greeting 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 or sick.
* 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. Check their web sites for more information.
* 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.
* Prepare and serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
* Collect food for the local food bank. Distribute items at a food bank or the local shelter.
* Donate clothes to those in need, such as winter coats and hats and mittens for children.
* “Clean Your Desk” for the children of Nicaragua by gathering school supplies such as pencils and erasers, paper and notebooks, art supplies, crayons and markers, scissors and rulers, musical instruments, basketballs, baseballs, etc. Pack the supplies in sturdy boxes and ship them to Quest for Peace in Maryland. See the Quest for Peace web site for more information.
* Visit the elderly or work at a senior citizen facility or nursing home, and/or do housecleaning for the homebound.
* Sponsor a child, elderly person, family, or community with the necessities of life through organizations such as Simply Smiles, the Christian Foundation for Children and Aging, Heifer Project, or Gift of Hope from Catholic Relief Services. See their web sites for more information.
* Give gifts that support the poor such as purchasing crafts from Work of Human Hands sponsored by Catholic Relief Services and SERRV International. See the CRS web site for more information.
* Serve CRS “Coffee Project” coffee or hot chocolate to guests this holiday season. Share information about the project with guests.

### 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 #9.

### Advent Activities

#### Jesus’ Name Ornaments

You will need glass ornaments, permanent markers, and Christmas ribbon for this activity. Check out a local crafts shop and Christmas store.

Help children look up the Scripture verses listed below and find the name for Jesus in each verse. Have the children write the names on the glass ornaments. They could write the Scripture references also. Help the children tie a ribbon in a bow around the top of each ornament. The ornaments can be hung on the Christmas tree or a tabletop tree.

Isaiah 9:6 Wonderful Counselor

Isaiah 9:6 Mighty God

Isaiah 9:6 Everlasting Father

Isaiah 9:6 Prince of Peace

Matthew 1:23 Emmanuel

Matthew 9:15 Bridegroom

Matthew 11:19 Son of Man

Mark 1:24 Holy One of God

Luke 2:11 Christ the Lord

John 1:29 Lamb of God

John 1:41 Messiah

John 1:49 Son of God

John 1:49 King of Israel

John 6:48 Bread of Life

John 10:7 Gate

John 10:11 Good Shepherd

John 11:25 Resurrection and Life

John 14:6 The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Acts 3:14 Holy and Righteous One

Romans 15:12 Root of Jesse

Ephesians 2:20 Chief Cornerstone

2 Thessalonians 3:16 Lord of Peace

Revelation 17:14 Lord of Lords

Revelation 17:14 King of Kings

Revelation 22:16 Root and Offspring of David

Revelation 22:16 Morning Star

##### Card Ornaments

You will need old Christmas cards, poster board, children’s scissors, and art supplies for this activity. Cut out art from Christmas card fronts and glue them to poster board. Trim the poster board around the art. Add glitter, glitter glue, beads, sequins, and pieces of ribbon, lace, and doilies.

Phrases from Scripture verses could be added to the art or poster board. Use quotes from the Lectionary readings on your card ornaments.

Punch a hole in the center top of each ornament and hang it on the Christmas tree or a wreath.

**Lectionary Readings**

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

##### Write Prayers for Advent

Here are a variety of Advent prayers that people can use to write their own prayers for each week of Advent. Consider writing the prayer on a large file card or all four prayers on a placemat.

**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 Week Two**

*Dear God, help us prepare for the coming of Christ. Forgive us for the things we have done wrong. Amen.*

**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!*

**A Prayer for Advent**

God of all wisdom, our hearts yearn for the warmth of your love, and our minds search for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Savior, and strengthen us to grow in love. At the dawn of his coming may we rejoice in his presence and welcome the light of his truth.

This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**A Table Prayer for Advent**

As we prepare for the coming of your Son, O God, we give you thanks for this food and drink,

signs of your gracious love. May this meal strengthen us to share your gifts with the hungry and all who look for your justice and mercy. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

##### Create an Advent Prayer Chain

Cut twenty-five strips of green and red paper, enough for each day of Advent. As a family identify the people – near and far – and the needs of your community, nation, and world that you want to pray for this Advent. Write your prayer intentions on the 25 strips of paper, fold them, and place them in a basket. Leave several strips blank so that you can add prayer intentions throughout the month.

On each day of Advent one family member pulls a strip from the basket, reads it, and adds this new link to your Advent Prayer Chain. Watch the chain grow day by day. When the basket is empty and the chain complete, it is Christmas Eve.

##### Give Simple Gifts

Overwhelmed by all of the commercialism at Christmas time? Exhausted by the hours of Christmas shopping? Tired of giving the same old gifts? Try something new this Christmas – simple gifts! Here are several ideas to start you thinking.

* Add to a collection – books, movie videos, CDs, toys, wine, stamps, coins, ceramics, art
* Key into an interest – sports (equipment or tickets to an event), music (subscription, tickets to a concert), drama or the arts (tickets to a play or musical, drama or art lessons, art supplies)
* Spend time together – a date with your child, spouse, friend, parent – they choose where!
* Donate to a worthy organization in the person’s name (Check out the ones described in this month’s calendar –Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Heifer Project International, CRS.)
* Give gifts of your own creating – food (cookies, bread), artwork, pottery, sewing
* Give a plant and directions for its care
* Give a service using your own talents – babysitting, a room painted, a garden planted
* Teach a skill using your own talents – cooking, writing, carpentry, using the Internet, painting, drawing, sewing

##### Experience Forgiveness

Together read Luke 5:17-26 and then reflect as a family on forgiveness. What does forgiveness mean to you? Discuss the meaning of forgiveness and give examples of what forgiveness means to each person.

Who are the family members from whom you need forgiveness? Write (or draw) a forgiveness card for each of these people. Send or give the cards to each person. Invite everyone to share a sign of forgiveness with each other and then close with the prayer for the second week of Advent.

We experience God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. During Advent, many churches expand their schedules for this sacrament, or they offer special reconciliation services. Check the schedule that is available at your church.

In addition, gather as a family to pray for God’s forgiveness. Hold hands and say the *Act of Contrition* together. End your prayer time with a sign of peace.

*O my God, I am sorry for my sins. In choosing to sin, and failing to do good, I have sinned against You and Your Church. I firmly intend, with the help of Your Son, to do penance and to sin no more. Amen.*

##### Celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a remembrance of the day in 1531 when Mary appeared in Mexico to Juan Diego. She left a picture of herself on his cloak. In this picture, she is an Indian, like Juan Diego, and she is wrapped in a *cinto*, the sash that was worn by women when they were pregnant. She was pregnant with Christ. Our Lady of Guadalupe brought a message of hope and compassion and new dignity to the Aztec people, who had been persecuted by the Spanish explorers. Celebrate the feast by learning about the cultures of Mexico. Offer your Advent morning prayer to Mary. Read the Magnificat in Luke 1:46-56.

##### Decorate and Bless Your Christmas Tree

Decorate your Christmas tree this year with a family flavor by asking every family member, at home or away, to create an ornament identifying their special gifts and talents. You can also decorate your tree with photos of all your extended family members, especially ones you will not see this Christmas season.

After you decorate your tree pray together, *Gracious God, let your blessings come upon us as we light this tree. May all who stand in its light eagerly welcome Jesus, the true Light that never fades. Amen.*

##### Write a Christmas Pledge

Use the following Christmas pledge to create your own Christmas pledge. Invite every family member to do the same. Hang it on the Christmas tree or the refrigerator for all to see.

* Believing in the true spirit of Christmas, I commit myself to:
* Remembering those people who truly need my gifts
* Expressing my love in more direct ways than gifts
* Examining my holiday activities in light of my deepest values
* Being a peacemaker within my circle of family and friends
* Rededicating myself to my spiritual growth

##### Light the Way of Christ

This Christmas Eve prepare *luminarias*. Lighting *luminarias* is an old Hispanic tradition, begun as a symbolic way to light the way for the Christ child. These decorative lights are brown or white lunch bags, folded down about one inch at the top and filled with two to three inches of sand and one votive candle. Arrange the *luminarias* along your walkway or driveway, showing Christ the way into your home. Once it is dark, light the candles and celebrate Jesus’ coming again into your family and community.

### Handout #10.

### Advent Word Scramble

Unscramble the letters to find these words associated with Christmas and write them in the box.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **People** | **Places** | **Things/Ideas** |
| NJHO EHT TBITPAS | HHEEMETBL | ERTE |
| GNALE BILGREA | CCRUHH | THRAEW |
| YMRA | ZARNETHA | RAGMEN |
| MLEMNAEU | MEOH | TESRPNSE |
| SJHEPO | BLATES | SIOEOKC |
| MYAIFL | NIN | RTSA |
| SUEJS | DIESFL | HESASIM |
| AHASII | NI ORUY TAREH | REPREPA |

##### Advent Word Scramble Answer Sheet

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| People | Places | Things/Ideas |
| JOHN THE BAPTIST | BETHLEHEM | TREE |
| ANGEL GABRIEL | CHURCH | WREATH |
| MARY | NAZARETH | MANGER |
| EMMANUEL | HOME | PRESENTS |
| JOSEPH | STABLE | COOKIES |
| FAMILY | INN | STAR |
| JESUS | FIELDS | MESSIAH |
| ISAIAH | IN YOUR HEART | PREPARE |

### Prayer Service

##### Gather

Gracious God, we give you thanks for sending Jesus as our Messiah.

He is the One who opens our eyes to your unconditional love,

gives us feet to walk along the path of love and justice,

forgives our sins so that we may be made whole,

opens our ears to hear your Good News in our daily lives,

and give us hope to live as people of the light.

We ask this in the name of our Messiah and Savior. Amen.

##### Listen

**Looking for the Messiah—A Story from the Monastery in the Mountains**

(From: *Golden Rules: The Ten Ethical Values Parents Need to Teach Their Children.* Wayne Dosick.)

High in the mountains was a monastery that had once been known throughout the world. Its monks were pious, its students were enthusiastic. The chants from the monastery’s chapel deeply touched the hearts of people who came there to pray and meditate.

But something changed. Fewer and fewer young men came to study there; fewer and fewer people came for spiritual nourishment. The monks who remained became disheartened and sad.

Deeply worried, the abbot of the monastery went off in search of an answer. Why had his monastery fallen on such hard times?

The abbot came to a guru, and he asked the master, “Is it because of some sin of ours that the monastery is no longer full of vitality?”

“Yes,” replied the master, “it is the sin of ignorance.”

“The sin of ignorance?” questioned the abbot. “Of what are we ignorant?”

The guru looked at the abbot for a long, long time, and then he said, “One of you is the messiah in disguise. But you are all ignorant of this.” Then, the guru closed his eyes, and he was silent.

“The messiah?” thought the abbot. “The messiah is one of us? Who could it be? Could it be Brother Cook? Could it be Brother Treasurer? Could it be Brother Bell-Ringer? Could it be Brother Vegetable Grower?

“Which one? Which one? Every one of us has faults, failings, human defects. Isn’t the messiah supposed to be perfect? But perhaps these faults and failings are part of his disguise. Which one? Which one?”

When the abbot returned to the monastery, he gathered all the monks together and told them what the guru had said.

“One of us? The messiah? Impossible!”

But the master had spoken, and the master was never wrong.

“One of us? The messiah? Incredible! But it must be so. Which one? Which one? That brother over there? That one? That one?”

Whichever one of the monks was the messiah, he was, surely, in disguise.

Not knowing who amongst them was the messiah, all the monks began treating each other with new respect. “You never know,” they thought, “he might be the one, so I had better deal with him kindly.”

It was not long before the monastery was filled with new-found joy. Soon, new students came to learn, and people came from far and wide to be inspired by the chants of the kind, smiling monks.

For once again, the monastery was filled with the spirit of love.

##### Respond

We pray for time to prepare for the coming of the Messiah in our lives and in our homes . . .

Response: Hear us, O Lord

We pray that we open our hearts and minds to the Word of God that we hear every Sunday of Advent . . .

Response: Hear us, O Lord

We pray that we celebrate the Advent season in prayer and ritual at home . . .

Response: Hear us, O Lord

We pray that we find ways to serve the poor in our midst during this Advent season . . .

Response: Hear us, O Lord

We pray that we turn away from the busyness and commercialism during December and focus on Jesus and his coming . . .

Response: Hear us, O Lord

We pray that we share in the love of our families and friends during Advent and Christmas . . .

Response: Hear us, O Lord

We pray that we be blessed with the courage to share the Good News of the Messiah’s coming . . .

Response: Hear us, O Lord

##### Go Forth

Let us pray . . .

May the spirit of the Lord rest upon us and bless us

with the spirit of wisdom and understanding,

with the spirit of counsel and might,

with the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.   
May our delight be in our love for the Lord. Amen.