



vibrantfaith

+ Generations Together

Advent

Here is a cross-generational session for all members of the congregation exploring the meaning of Advent and its importance in for our preparation to celebrate the birth of the Christ child. This session is designed to be conducted in about 90 minutes, and can be adapted for a shorter or longer timeframe.

Introduction

This session works well just prior to, or on the First Sunday of Advent. The four weeks before Christmas is known as the season of Advent in the church. It's a time for waiting and preparation. In family groups, participants will talk about waiting, engage in a fun activity to help them prepare for the Christ child, and finally they will explore the Nativity in order to understand what really happened with the birth of Jesus.

I. Gather

[use the following adaptation of the activity Advent: A Time of Waiting)

Prepare in Advance

- Mark your Bible to Psalm 27:14 and Lamentations 3:25
- Cue up the YouTube video [Advent in 2 Minutes](#)

Activity Plan

1. Invite all participants to gather round. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

God, be with us during our times of waiting. Amen.

2. Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 27:14 "Wait for the Lord ; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

Then ask another family member to read aloud Lamentations 3:25 "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him."

3. Show the YouTube video [Advent in 2 Minutes](#). Ask participants to form family groups, or groups of 4-5 persons, and discuss these questions:
 - What does Advent mean to you?
 - Is the season of Advent relevant for today? Why or why not?
 - What has been your past experience of Advent?
 - What gives Advent meaning?

- When do you find yourself waiting?
- How do you wait well?

4. Invite some comments to be shared with the large group before moving to the next activity.

II. Grow

During this part of the session, families (and individuals) will each make an Advent paper chain that they will use at home throughout the days of Advent. What follows is an adaptation of the activity called Advent Chain.

Prepare in Advance:

- Need colored paper, tape, markers, Bible
- Using the colored paper cut 24 for each family and each independent individual who will be attending.
- Make the strips large enough to write at least a sentence or two on each.

Activity Plan

1. Distribute strips, markers and tape among family groups.
2. Instruct them to write an Advent pledge or prayer or goal on each strip. This can be a prayer request, a goal to be accomplished during Advent, or a Bible verse can be written out if short enough to fit.
3. Have them make the strips of paper into loops and tape them together into one chain.
4. Tell participants that they are to take the chain home and display it in a prominent place such as around a Christmas tree, on the banister of a staircase, across the mantel of a fireplace.
5. Instruct them that each day during Advent, they are to take one link off the chain and do the activity as a group or individually.
6. Invite discussion in the large group around these questions:
 - Would a few people please share one or two pledges that they wrote on their paper chain?
 - What specifically do you and your family want to focus on this Advent?
 - What gets in your way? What do you need to do differently?

III. Go Forth

This part of the session is based on the activity Know Your Nativity. Scripture, tradition and lots of made for TV holiday specials have shaped the way we celebrate Christmas and tell the story of Jesus' birth. How well do you know the real story? This activity dares us to ask, "What really happened?"

Needed: Bible, nativity set and either paper and markers, or play-dough.

Activity Plan

1. Set up a nativity set on center table for all to see. Invite young people to share what they know about the different characters and figures in the set. If this particular nativity set has a special history to the family, this is a good time for someone to share that story.
2. Work as a group to name other characters or creatures in the story of Jesus' birth that are not featured in the nativity set (many sets do not have shepherds or even Joseph). Have someone make a place-holder for each character or creature you have listed. Do this by drawing them or making them out of play-dough. Enjoy the creative process and have some fun working together, even if the creations don't look as professional as your nativity set.

3. Once you have set the extra pieces in your nativity set, form family or small groups, get your Bible read the following Scriptures passages to those in your group. Work together to make a list of all the characters and creatures listed in the story.
 - The Birth of Jesus, Luke 2:1-40
 - The Birth of Jesus, Matthew 1:18 – 2:23
4. Compare your new list of characters and creatures to the original nativity and your added pieces. Use the following questions to guide your conversation. If needed, go back and look at the Scripture passages again.
 - How did Mary and Joseph get to Bethlehem from Nazareth?
 - What characters or creatures shared their sleeping quarters?
 - Who came to greet the newborn baby on the first night?
 - Where did the Magi (or kings) greet the baby and who else did they see?
 - I wonder if the Magi saw the baby before his presentation in the Temple. What do you think?
 - I wonder how Magi from different countries and cultures knew about Jesus. What do you think?
 - Who do you think was the most uncomfortable on the first Christmas?
 - I wonder what other teenagers said about Mary back home.
 - Which character do you most identify with and why?
 - What most surprised you in this reflection on the Christmas story?
5. Remind participants to take home their Advent Chains. Then close the session with this prayer.

God, as we look back and remember the story of the first Christmas, help us to remember that countless unnamed characters probably played a role. Help us to be characters in the Christmas story this year, even if our story isn't told. Help us to share Christ's light, even if we don't get our name in a book. May this nativity remind us of the Christmas story, of this time together as a Christian family, and may it help us live out the story in each of our lives. Amen.

Advent: A Time of Waiting

By Jolene Roehlkepartain

The four weeks **before** Christmas is known as the season of Advent in the church. It's a time of waiting and preparation. As a family, talk about how to wait well.

For

Teen Family

Season

Winter



Needed

Bible, four candles and matches, blog article [Celebrating The Waiting: Why Advent Still Matters](#)

Prepare in Advance

- Mark your Bible to Psalm 27:14 and Lamentations 3:25 (or see the text below)
- Gather needed materials as listed above

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

God, be with us during our times of waiting. Amen.

2. Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 27:14 "Wait for the Lord ; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

Then ask another family member to read aloud Lamentations 3:25 "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him."

3. As a family, read the blog article [Celebrating The Waiting: Why Advent Still Matters](#). Discuss these questions:
 - What does Advent mean to you?
 - Is the season of Advent relevant for today? Why or why not?
 - What has been your past experience of Advent?
 - What gives Advent meaning?
 - When do you find yourself waiting?
 - How do you wait well?
4. Mark the four Sundays of Advent by lighting a candle each week and reading the corresponding scripture:
 - Four Sundays before Christmas—Light one candle. Read aloud Isaiah 40:1-11.
 - Three Sundays before Christmas—Light two candles. Read aloud Luke 1:68-79.
 - Two Sundays before Christmas—Light three candles. Read aloud Philippians 4:4-7.
 - One Sunday before Christmas—Light four candles. Read aloud Luke 1:26-38.
 - On Christmas Day (or Christmas Eve)—Light one candle. Read aloud Luke 2:1-20.
5. During Advent (and other times of waiting), talk about how to wait well and how to be patient.

Advent Chain

By Courtney Still



In the days leading up to Christmas, prepare your heart to celebrate the birth of Jesus by taking a link off your paper Advent chain and praying for friends and family, or by connecting with the Bible.

For

Young Adult

Season

Winter (beginning of Advent)

Needed

Colored paper, tape, markers, Bible, tree or other place to display in home

Prepare in Advance

- The preparation of this project will need to happen before the first Sunday in Advent.
- Cut 24 strips of paper, making sure there is enough room to write at least a sentence or two on each.

Experience

1. Gather everyone involved with this project and split up the strips of paper among the group.
2. Take time to write something on each piece. This can be a prayer request, a goal to be accomplished during Advent, or a Bible verse can be written out if short enough to fit.
3. Make the strips of paper into loops and tape them together into one chain.
4. Decide where you will display your chain – around a Christmas tree, on the banister of a staircase, across the mantel of a fireplace.
5. During Advent, take one link off the chain each day and do the activity as a group or individually, but make sure to discuss later.

Experience

Open up in conversation as a group by using these questions:

- How do you suppose your family or roommates would change together if you took this time all year to pray for the needs of one another and be challenged by the word of God?
- What specifically do you want to focus on during Advent, this period leading up to Christmas? How can you carry this focus into the rest of the year?
- What gets in the way of giving all your focus to Jesus during this time? What do you need to do differently?

Pray

After hanging up your Advent chain and having an intentional conversation, say this prayer together:

Dear God, during this time of Advent we ask that you keep us focused on Jesus' birth and the celebration of your love and sacrifice for us. Bring us together through prayer and your Word. Amen.

Know Your Nativity

By Lee Yates

Scripture, tradition and lots of made for TV holiday specials have shaped the way we celebrate Christmas and tell the story of Jesus' birth. How well do you know the real story? This activity dares us to ask, "What really happened?"

For

Teen Family

Season

Winter

Needed

Bible, nativity set and either paper and markers, or play-dough.



Activity Plan

1. Set up a nativity set in the center of a table or conversation space. Invite everyone to share what they know about the different characters and figures in the set. If this particular nativity set has a special history to the family, this is a good time for someone to share that story.
2. Work as a group to name other characters or creatures in the story of Jesus' birth that are not featured in your family nativity set (many sets do not have shepherds or even Joseph). Have someone make a place-holder for each character or creature you have listed. Do this by drawing them or making them out of play-dough. Enjoy the creative process and have some fun working together, even if the creations don't look as professional as your nativity set.
3. Once you have set the extra pieces in your nativity set, get your Bible read the following Scriptures passages out loud. Work together to make a list of all the characters and creatures listed in the story.
 - The Birth of Jesus, Luke 2:1-40
 - The Birth of Jesus, Matthew 1:18 – 2:23
4. Compare your new list of characters and creatures to the original nativity and your added pieces. Use the following questions to guide your conversation. If needed, go back and look at the Scripture passages again.
 - How did Mary and Joseph get to Bethlehem from Nazareth?
 - What characters or creatures shared their sleeping quarters?
 - Who came to greet the newborn baby on the first night?
 - Where did the Magi (or kings) greet the baby and who else did they see?
 - I wonder if the Magi saw the baby before his presentation in the Temple. What do you think?
 - I wonder how Magi from different countries and cultures knew about Jesus. What do you think?
 - Who do you think was the most uncomfortable on the first Christmas?
 - I wonder what other teenagers said about Mary back home.
 - Which character do you most identify with and why?
 - What most surprised you in this reflection on the Christmas story?
5. Ask someone to close the activity with a prayer of their own or read the one below.

God, as we look back and remember the story of the first Christmas, help us to remember that countless unnamed characters probably played a role. Help us to be characters in the Christmas story this year, even if our story isn't told. Help us to share Christ's light, even if we don't get our name in a book. May this nativity remind us of the Christmas story, of this time together as a family, and may it help us live out the story in each of our lives. Amen