

ADVENT



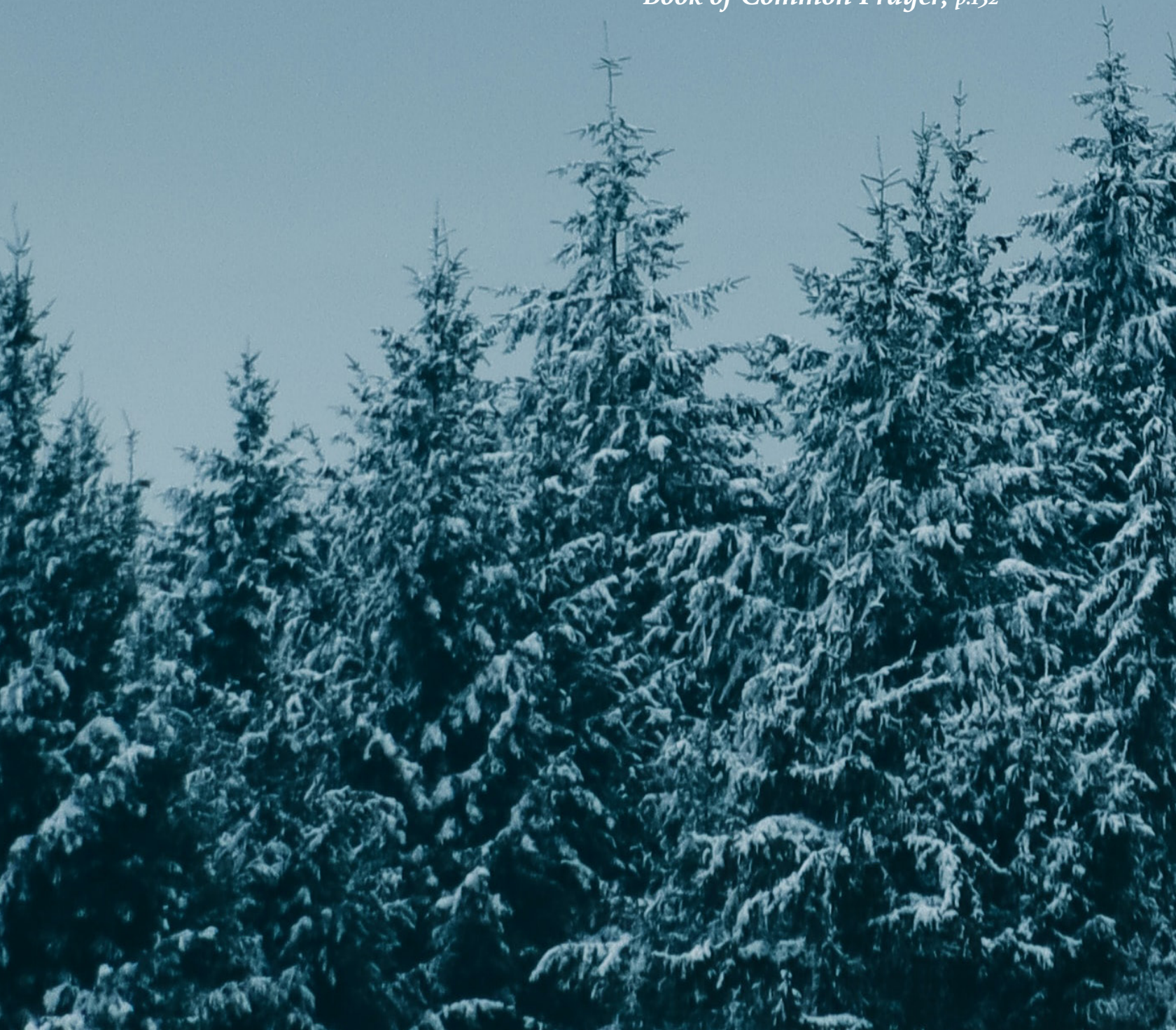
Zach Barton




Family Leadership Network
NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

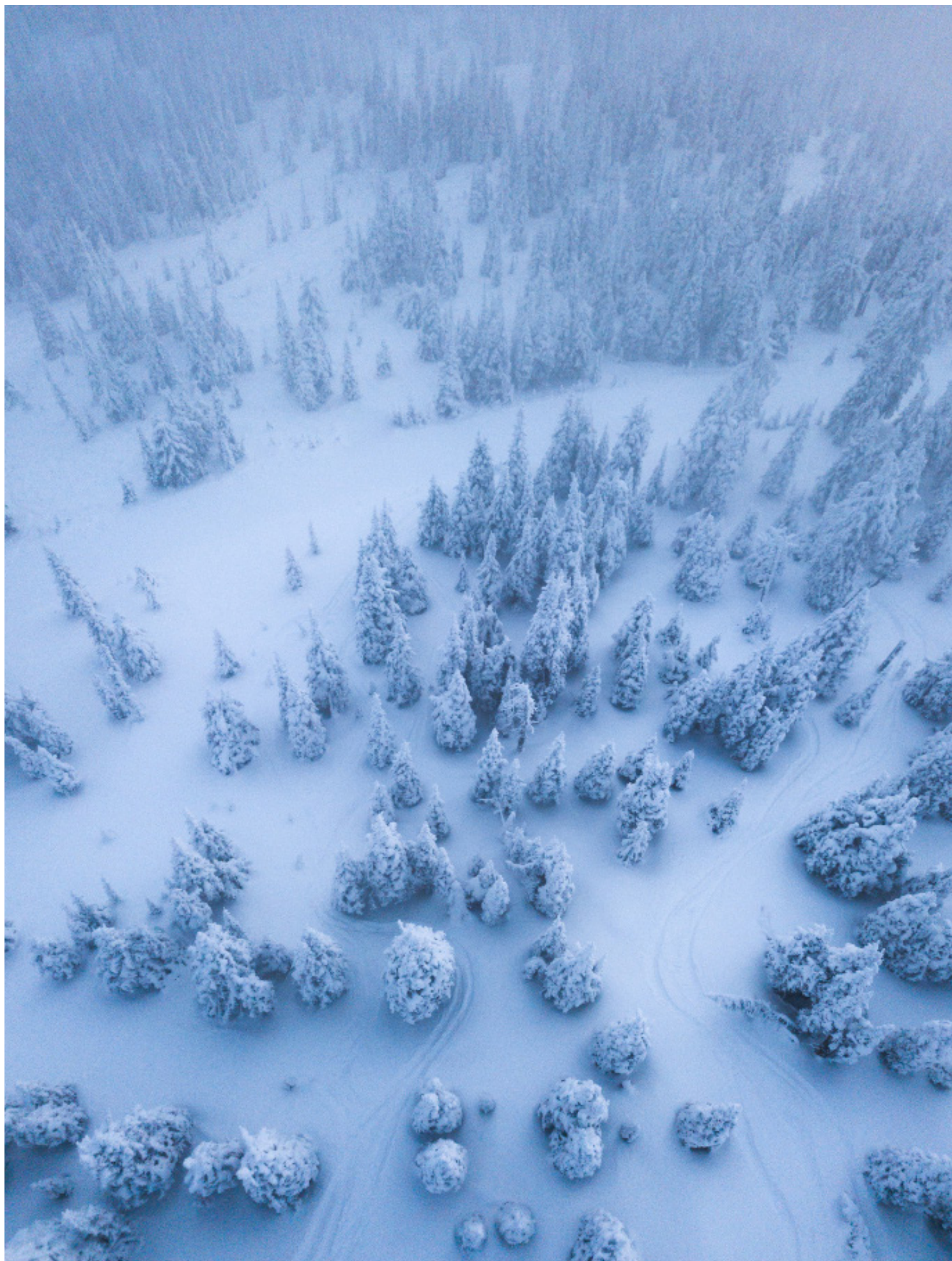
*Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death,
and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall
come again in power and great glory to judge the world, we may
without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.*

— Book of Common Prayer, p.152





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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent means “coming” or “arrival” and is the traditional seasonal celebration of the first advent of Jesus in the humility and the anxious waiting of His second advent in glory. The first mention of Advent dates back as early as the 6th and 4th centuries, depending on the source.

The season of Advent is just that – a season of preparation and waiting: First for Christ’s second coming to judge the living and the dead, but also to celebrate Christ’s first arrival at Christmas. Think of Advent as the preparation before the celebration of Christmas. In much the same way that the Israelites awaited the Messiah to fulfill God’s promises from Genesis 3:15, so Christians await the return of Jesus the Messiah to make all things new and to “make every sad thing come untrue.”

The Advent season begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continues up to Christmas day.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

READ

For each week, there is a primary text to read on Sundays. Additionally, there are daily readings assigned to accompany the lighting of an Advent wreath, if you choose. If done weekly, use the reading for Sunday perhaps around the dinner table with friends and family.

THINK

After reading scripture, take a moment to reflect on what you have read. Slow down. Allow yourself to wonder about parts that surprised you or seemed mysterious. Ask questions and be prepared to think deeply about what you’ve just read. As Christians, we believe that God came to dwell among us as a baby. Let this scandalous miracle sit with you and allow yourself to feel the weight of it!

PRAY

Next, spend a few moments in prayer, bringing to God your thoughts, emotions, hopes, and frustrations.

GO

When we truly receive the good news of the Gospel, we are motivated to embrace new habits and extend the good news to others. How will you put your faith into action in response to God’s word?

There are a variety of ways to celebrate the season: many people use an Advent calendar which counts down until Christmas and builds anticipation day by day. Another popular tradition is marking the progression of the season through an Advent wreath made up of five candles. This symbol is borrowed from the emphasis throughout Scripture of Jesus being the Light of the World. Each week, a new candle is lit in anticipation of Christmas Eve. The fifth candle is lit on Christmas Eve to represent Jesus’ first advent. Through this theme of ever-increasing light penetrating the darkness, we see a picture of the gospel story.

Whether the season of Advent is relatively new to you or not, it is a significant time in which we have an opportunity to remember God’s promise to send One who would bring about the redemption of his people and his creation. God promised a savior, and He kept that promise perfectly.

FAMILY WORSHIP

As we celebrate Advent with our parish family and Christians the world over, we continue to wait, with eager anticipation for Jesus to come again and establish His kingdom here on Earth.

This booklet contains Scripture readings, devotional thoughts, and ideas for activities to celebrate Advent together as a parish. Consideration has been taken into account for parents with very young children as well as older children. Please note: there is likely more provided here than you will have time for and your children will have the attention span for. Don't feel like you have to do it all or do it exactly in the same order. What follows is a weekly guide to celebrating Advent with intentionality, anticipation, and wonder alongside our children. Consider the following for times of weekly family worship during Advent this season:

SONGS

Prepare Him Room (by Sovereign Grace Music)

Away in a Manger

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Mary Consoles Eve (by Rain for Roots)

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Consider searching for Advent playlists on Spotify or Apple Music to help you feel and sing the themes of this special season with your children: Let this scandalous miracle sit with you and allow yourself to feel the weight of it!

DECORATIONS

To help your family remember the birth narrative, consider placing a nativity set in a prominent place in your home. Many people light an Advent candle each week when they set aside time to read and pray together as a family which helps to build anticipation for Christmas Day, moving from darkness to light. Consider other ways you could tie in the dark-to-light theme through the decorations in your home: adding more lights/decorations to the tree each week, etc.

HOUSEHOLD DISCIPLESHIP TIME & MOMENTS

As noted, a good time to consider celebrating Advent is during the family dinner time meal. The Story of Jesus' birth is well known by many. But even still, take time to read the accounts in Luke. If you have young children, read them the stories "He's Here", "The Light of The World", and "A Dream From Heaven" from the Jesus Storybook Bible. Talk about what it must have been like where Jesus was born, what the shepherds must have felt, how God's promise to send Jesus as a baby gives us hope that He will keep His promise to one day return at His second advent. Try to avoid 'yes' or 'no' questions and instead ask open-ended questions that will provoke wonder and awe from your children. Questions like, "I wonder what that must have felt like to be there!" and "Why do you think God would want to come to earth as a helpless baby?"



The lack of mystery in our modern life is our downfall and our poverty.
A human life is worth as much as the respect it holds for the mystery.
We retain the child in us to the extent that we honor the mystery.
Therefore, children have open, wide-awake eyes, because they know that
they are surrounded by the mystery. They are not yet finished with this world;
they still don't know how to struggle along and avoid the mystery, as we do.
We destroy the mystery because we sense that here we reach the boundary of our being,
because we want to be lord over everything and have it at our disposal,
and that's just what we cannot do with the mystery....

Living without mystery means knowing nothing of the mystery of our own life,
nothing of the mystery of another person, nothing of the mystery of the world;
it means passing over our own hidden qualities and those of others and the world.
It means remaining on the surface, taking the world seriously only to the extent that it can
be calculated and exploited, and not going beyond the world of calculation and exploitation.

Living without mystery means not seeing the crucial processes of life at all
and even denying them.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

God Is In The Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas





WEEK 1

IN DARKNESS A LIGHT SHINES

“Advent begins in the dark.” –Fleming Rutledge

CALL TO WORSHIP

“For you have rescued my soul from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living.”
Psalm 56:12

**The first Advent candle is lit.*

READ

The assigned reading for the day is read.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| ◦ Sunday | John 1:1-19 | ◦ Thursday | Ephesians 5:6-14 |
| ◦ Monday | Matthew 4:12-17 | ◦ Friday | Isaiah 60:19-22 |
| ◦ Tuesday | Isaiah 60:1-3 | ◦ Saturday | Catch up day! |
| ◦ Wednesday | John 3:16-21 | | |

KIDS

Have one family member read the following out loud:

“The Terrible Lie” from The Jesus Storybook Bible (JSB)

REFLECT

Consider the words from The Jesus Storybook Bible, “Before they left the garden, God whispered a promise to Adam and Eve: ‘It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I’m going to do battle against the snake. I’ll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I’m coming back for you!’” God presents himself as a promise maker & keeper. Discuss what making and keeping promises means and wonder aloud about God’s promises kept.

PRAY

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

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Set out a Nativity but add a new piece each day, remembering to wait to put the baby Jesus in the manger until Christmas Day!
- Make an Advent Wreath at the Cathedral Advent Festival or Advent Calendar at home





WEEK 2

LOST & FOUND

“The good news of Advent is not that we are faithful in our waiting (we often aren’t) but that God is faithful in his coming.” –Rich Villodas

CALL TO WORSHIP

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”
Isaiah 40:3

**The first and second Advent candles are lit.*

READ

The assigned reading for the day is read.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| ◦ Sunday | Psalm 119:105-106 | ◦ Thursday | Isaiah 55:1-8 |
| ◦ Monday | Mark 1:1-3 | ◦ Friday | Luke 3:1-6 |
| ◦ Tuesday | Luke 15:6,9,32 | ◦ Saturday | Catch up day! |
| ◦ Wednesday | Isaiah 40:1-5 | | |

KIDS

Have one family member read the following out loud:

“Treasure Hunt” from The Jesus Storybook Bible (JSB)

REFLECT

We have a home that was lost. We have a way home because of Jesus. God has a treasure that was lost – his children! Consider the words of the JSB: “It was why Jesus had come into the world! To find God’s treasure and pay the price to win them back.”

PRAY

Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Set out more nativity pieces, remembering to wait to put the baby Jesus in the manger until Christmas Day!
- Go on a walk at dusk and note the increasing darkness that will eventually give way to dawn.

WEEK 3

FREEDOM & SLAVERY

“In Advent, we think our way back to the ancient people of God, to the call of Abraham and his family as the start of God’s rescue operation for a world in ruins and a human race in chaos. We follow the story of Israel’s hope, a hope that refused to die no matter what terrible things happened; a hope that the first Christians believed had become human in the baby Jesus.” –N.T. Wright

CALL TO WORSHIP

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, because of your love and because of your faithfulness.”
Psalm 115:1

**The first, second, and third Advent candles are lit.*

READ

The assigned reading for the day is read.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| ◦ Sunday | Eph. 2:13 & Lev. 26:13 | ◦ Thursday | Psalm 27:1-4 |
| ◦ Monday | Luke 4:16-21 | ◦ Friday | Isaiah 11:1-10 |
| ◦ Tuesday | Romans 15:4-13 | ◦ Saturday | Catch up day! |
| ◦ Wednesday | Zephaniah 3:14-17 | | |

KIDS

Have one family member read the following out loud:

“God Makes a Way” from The Jesus Storybook Bible (JSB)

REFLECT

This week we have considered that apart from God, we are enslaved; but he has come to set us free. In this week’s story from the JSB, we saw how God rescued his people Israel from slavery. But God’s redeeming of Israel at the Red Sea also prefigures our redemption from sin and death.

PRAY

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

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Set out more nativity pieces, remembering to wait to put the baby Jesus in the manger until Christmas Day!
- Have your child(ren) draw a picture during or after you discuss today’s story. Discuss it afterward.





WEEK 4

THE LIGHT HAS COME & WILL COME AGAIN

“To be a Christian is to live every day of our lives in solidarity with those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, but to live in the unshakable hope of those who expect the dawn.” –Fleming Rutledge

CALL TO WORSHIP

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.” Psalm 67:1

**The first, second, third, and fourth Advent candles are lit.*

READ

The assigned reading for the day is read.

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| ◦ Sunday | Luke 2:25-33 | ◦ Wednesday | Luke 24:22 |
| ◦ Monday | Mark 13:33-37 | ◦ Friday | Luke 2:8-15 |
| ◦ Tuesday | Psalm 130:5-8 | ◦ Saturday | "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" |

KIDS

Have one family member read the following out loud:

“The Light of the World” and “A Dream of Heaven” from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (JSB)

REFLECT

As mentioned in the Introduction, Advent is not just about the first coming of Jesus but also about his second coming as well! Both are important and both are essential to our consideration of waiting: waiting for the promised One to return to make every sad thing come untrue!

PRAY

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and as we are sorely hindered by our sins from running the race that is set before us, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Move Mary and Joseph into the barn of the Nativity, but don't put baby Jesus in the manger just yet (unless you celebrate on Christmas Eve – then go ahead and put him in!)
- Sing or play a version of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" or "Oh Light (feat. Gungor and All Sons and Daughters)" on any streaming service or Youtube.





The earth held its breath.

As silent as snow falling, he came in.

And when no one was looking,

in the darkness,

He came.

– Sally Lloyd Jones

CHRISTMAS DAY

JOY TO THE WORLD

“The Birth of Christ is the ‘eucatastrophe’, [the sudden good turn of events] of Man’s history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. There is no tale ever told that men would rather find was true, and none which so many skeptical men have accepted as true on its own merits.”

—J.R.R. Tolkien

CALL TO WORSHIP

“The watchmen shout and sing for joy, for before their very eyes they see the Lord returning to Jerusalem.”
Isaiah 52:8

**Each Advent candle is lit with the addition of the Christ candle.*

READ

The assigned readings for the day are read.

- Matthew 1:18-25
- Luke 2:1-7

KIDS

Have one family member read the following out loud:

“He's Here!” from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (JSB)

REFLECT

Consider the words from The Jesus Storybook Bible, “Mary and Joseph named him Jesus, ‘Emmanuel’ – which means ‘God has come to live with us.’ Because, of course, he had.” This is the meaning of Advent and Christmas – that God himself has come to be with us and to rescue us from our sin and to one day return to set up his kingdom here on earth– and it all starts with a baby in a manger. Wonder aloud with your child(ren) at just how this is truly the greatest news of all time.

PRAY

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**

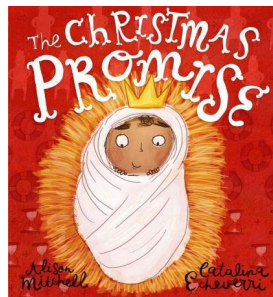
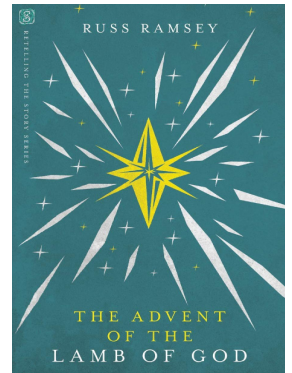
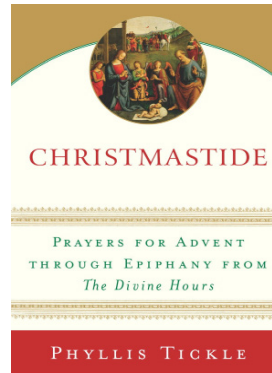
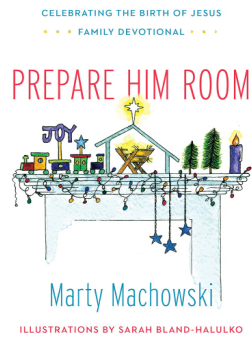
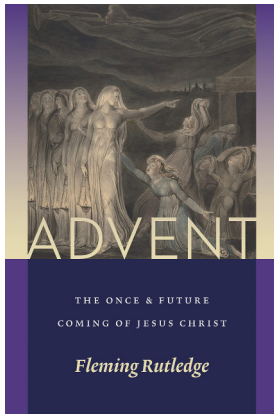
FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- If you have a Nativity set, finally bring out Jesus together and place him in the manger.
- Consider singing "Away In A Manger" or "Joy to The World".
- Attend a Christmas Eve or Christmas Day service at your church
- Set an hourly timer to remind you today that God is with you.



FURTHER READING

ADVENT RESOURCES



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NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE



**CATHEDRAL
CHURCH OF**
ST LUKE & ST PAUL

