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FAMILY RESOURCES

What happens at church should never stay at church! When we look at how faith formation happens in the lives of our children and adults, what happens at home and with families is the most important indicator of the lifelong faith growth of our kids. These resources are an opportunity to ensure that the season of Advent is not just an at-church experience. Anticipation during this season is already evident in the “Christmas” events around your communities and with children looking toward presents and other celebrations! Use this resource to ensure that the coming of Christ is central to the season.

This resource will be dramatically enhanced if you also include the daily devotionals with discussion questions that will be delivered directly to your inbox by signing up at www.pictureAdvent.com. Have a blessed Advent!

#PICTUREADVENT 2017 FAMILY RESOURCES
WRITTEN BY REV. MONIQUE MCBRIDE

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2017 ADVENT

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

The transition from the pinks, purples, and waiting of Advent to the reds, greens, and celebration of Christmas can be a tricky one. This Advent display will help your family observe the special season of Advent as you gradually move into the wonder of the Christmas story. Create this simple Advent Nativity display and follow the devotions and suggested activities with your family.

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HOW TO BUILD YOUR ADVENT NATIVITY:

1. Gather or make 9 wooden blocks big enough for your child to write a word and/or draw a picture on each side.
2. Label each block with these words and/or pictures. Write the Sunday of Advent on one side and the Nativity character on the other.

HOPE: Star

PEACE: Sheep

JOY: Shepherd

LOVE: Mary & Joseph

CHRISTMAS: Jesus

EPIPHANY: Wise Men

3. Find a small spot to label the blocks with the date.

4. Set up your blocks with the Advent words facing out. Flip them over as you celebrate each special day of the season.

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:



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ADVENT IS A TIME OF...

HOPE * PEACE * JOY * LOVE

WEEK ONE: (DEC 3- DEC 9) HOPE



Waiting is hard. Waiting for Christmas to come can be even harder. But, waiting is exactly what this first week of Advent is all about. The good news is, Advent gives us something to do while we wait. On this first week of Advent, we **HOPE** this Christmas (the

celebration of Jesus' birth) will be better than ever. No, we're not just **HOPING** for more toys. Advent **HOPE** is better than that! The **HOPE** of Advent is a belief that God is doing something great in our future. What do you **HOPE** for? What do think God **HOPES** for? Get out a Bible and read from **ISAIAH 9:2**. During Advent, we focus on the light Jesus brings. What are sources of light around us at Christmas? Find a time this week to go on a hunt for light. Light from Christmas trees, stars in the night sky, Christmas lights, lights from smiling eyes, and happy moments... Go on a bike ride and see how many homes in your neighborhood have Christmas lights up already. Choose a special spot for your nativity. Turn your **HOPE** to **STAR** and say a prayer together.

WEEK TWO: (DEC 10- DEC 16) PEACE



The second week of Advent is the week of **PEACE**. **PEACE** at this time of year can be hard to find. The good news is, Advent **PEACE** is not the kind of peace that requires quiet and stillness. Advent **PEACE** happens even on our busiest days. This **PEACE** reminds us that no matter what happens, Jesus is with us. We are not alone. Jesus is our shepherd and we are His sheep. Get out a Bible and read **PSALM 32**. This famous psalm reminds us that Jesus will guide our way. What brings you peace at Christmas time? A special movie? A favorite meal? A yummy dessert?

Take time to do something that brings you **PEACE** this week. Turn your **SHEEP** to **PEACE** and say a prayer together.



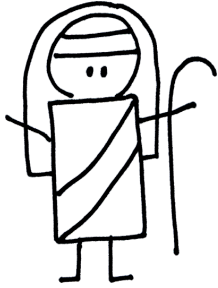
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WEEK THREE: (DECEMBER 17- DECEMBER 23) JOY



The third week of Advent is the week of **JOY**. With Christmas only a week away, we are all feeling excited. But, **JOY** is a lot more than happiness about what will be under the Christmas tree. The happiness we get from toys and stuff we buy in the store doesn't usually last very long. **JOY** is a feeling of deep down happiness even when we're sad or mad. This kind of **JOY** happens when we remember the love Jesus has for us. Read about the message of **JOY** the angels brought the shepherds in **LUKE 2:8-15**.

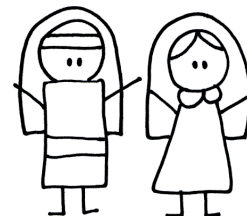
Sometimes we feel **JOY** when we bring happiness to others. Think of something you can do to bring joy to others this week. Bake someone Christmas cookies. Record yourself singing Christmas carols and send a video to friends and family. Make a new friend. Turn your **JOY** to **SHEPHERD** and say a prayer together.



WEEK FOUR: (DECEMBER 24) LOVE



The fourth Sunday of Advent is the Sunday of **LOVE**. While we usually have a week to celebrate Advent, this year we only get one day! On this day, we remember God's **LOVE** for us. The story of Christmas is the story of God's **LOVE** for all people throughout time. God's **LOVE** is the strongest kind of love there is. God's **LOVE** loves us no matter what. God's **LOVE** wants the best for us. God's **LOVE** is a daily choice to **LOVE** others even when it means putting ourselves last or when we don't feel like it. What can you do to share this kind of **LOVE** today? How can you **LOVE GOD AND LOVE OTHERS** each and every day? Write or draw a picture of a way you can do this and tuck it inside your Christmas tree. Read about the story of God's love in **MATTHEW 1:18-25**. In this story, Joseph puts his love for God and for Mary first above all things. Turn your **LOVE** to **MARY & JOSEPH** and say a prayer together.



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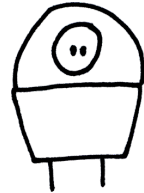


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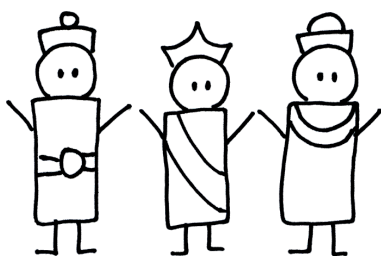
CHRISTMAS (DECEMBER 25) JESUS

MERRY CHRISTMAS! On December 25th, we celebrate the birthday of **JESUS**. On this special day, we remember the birth of **JESUS** long ago in a lowly manger or animal food tray. So, the question is, what you are doing on Christmas day to truly celebrate this day? How do you think **JESUS** would want us to remember His birthday? Who would **JESUS** want us to celebrate with? Christmas day can be busy and hectic and filled with the busyness of family, presents, and traditions. But, find some time today to do something specific to celebrate this special birthday. Bake and eat birthday cake for dessert. Invite someone who would otherwise be alone on Christmas to celebrate with you. Think of a way to bring healing or love to others as Jesus always did. If you don't do anything else, be sure to read the story of the birth of Jesus today. Read about the birth of **JESUS** in **LUKE 2:15-20**. Turn your **CHRISTMAS** to **JESUS** and say a prayer together.



WAIT...WHAT ABOUT THE WISE MEN & CAMELS??

Advent is the first of a three part season called, "The Season of the Nativity." First we celebrate the four Sundays of Advent and read Bible stories about preparing our hearts and minds for Jesus. Next, of course, is Christmas. I'm sure you already know Christmas is December 25th. But, did you know December 25th is only the first of twelve days of Christmas? On these days we celebrate the birth of Jesus. After these twelve days we celebrate the third and oldest part of the nativity holiday. This season is called **EPIPHANY**. During **EPIPHANY** we focus on the story of the wise men and the three gifts they brought to Jesus. Read about their found in



MATTHEW 2:1-12. What gifts would you bring Jesus this year? What do you think Jesus really wants for His birthday? Instead of putting everything away so quickly this year, keep out your nativity a little longer. Turn your **EPIPHANY** to **WISE MEN AND CAMELS** on **EPIPHANY** and say a prayer together.

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What is Advent? How does it help us celebrate Christmas?

Advent is the beginning of the Christian year and the season leading up to Christmas. During these four weeks before Christmas day, we prepare our hearts and minds for the celebration of Jesus' birth. The word Advent means "coming." During Advent, we look back to remember the way Jesus came as a baby long ago and look forward to Jesus' second coming when peace and healing will come to the world.

The celebration of Advent is a way for us to calm our hearts and minds at a time when the world tells us to do more, be more, and spend more. Advent is just the opposite. It is a time to help us slow down and celebrate the hope, peace, joy, and love of a life of faith. When we take time to celebrate these things, our hearts are ready to truly appreciate and enjoy the wonderful story of Jesus' birth at Christmas and continue on in the day to day journey of discipleship.

*We hope ADVENTure to Christmas is a blessing to you
and to your family this Advent season.*



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