

The background of the entire image is a photograph of a desert landscape. It features rolling, arid hills in shades of tan and brown. A dirt road winds through the valleys between the hills. The sky above is a deep, clear blue, filled with numerous small, bright white stars, suggesting a clear night. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Seek & Wonder

ON THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM

A D V E N T . . 2 0 2 0

*Seek
&
Wonder*
ON THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM

A D V E N T 2 0 2 0

All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

Romans 8:22-25
THE MESSAGE

The watching, waiting world we inhabit beckons us to join its cry for new creation. Yet it is not only the world around us that cries out, for 'The Spirit of God is arousing us within.' We sense that the loneliness, isolation, and disintegration we experience in the present are far from God's design for humanity. Advent is a time of waiting in the dark, watching for the light, and giving God space to enlarge our sense of wonder around Christ.

As Christians, we live between Christ's advents. Advent means coming or arrival. While the season of Advent prepares us to celebrate the birth of King Jesus at Christmas, its larger call is to prepare for his second coming. At his second advent, King Jesus will return in glory to save and to judge. His healing reign will be fully known as all that is wrong is made right.

We long for this great day, when every tear will be wiped away, when evil will finally be done away with. As we do so, may we grow in patience, long-suffering, and hope. For 'the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.'

Parents, we have a job to do as we usher our children through Advent; our children watch us, mimic us, and learn from us-- in our homes. We shape what they pay attention to. Parents, what will you pay attention to this season? Give yourself permission to let go of some of the cultural norms that surround December. Give yourself permission to move slowly through this Advent season. Slow down with your children. One way to think about this is with our physical space. Decorate for

Christmas a bit at a time: add pieces to the nativity slowly, put up the Christmas tree and leave it bare for a while, and use the darkness of the season to your advantage-- lights out earlier, sitting by the fire longer, using more candles. Allow yourself a slower pace to prepare your heart for Christmas.

Advent is the first season of the Church year. It lasts for 4 weeks leading up to Christmas day. So, depending on the calendar the season of Advent can last between 22-28 days. The 4 weeks of Advent can feel quick and possibly too short to fully engage the waiting of the season, especially as we fight the cultural urges to start celebrating Christmas right after Thanksgiving. One of the gifts of following the church calendar is that, after Advent, there are 12 days of Christmas! During Advent, think of things that you might want to hold off on doing until after Christmas begins. There is a list of ideas for celebrating Christmastide at the end of this devotional.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

As a discipline during Advent, find a time each day to read Scripture and pray to prepare for the celebration of Christmas. Consider setting aside a specific time each day together, with your family, to do this. It will help create a rhythm that the children can look forward to each day.

Each week this guide will add scripture context to what the kids learn in Godly Play on Sundays. The Advent teaching from Godly Play frames the weekly teaching in terms of the children journeying "on the road to Bethlehem." Each week there are key people in the story of Jesus' birth that show us the



Materials Needed

- Purple (the color of Advent) fabric/felt - about 1' x 4' (or 4 sheets of purple felt)
- 7 peg people (or toy people figures) to represent the prophet, Mary, Joseph, a shepherd, and the 3 wise men. (feel free to use what you have around the house; doll house people, action figures, play mobil, etc.)
- Animal figures: a donkey and sheep
- 4 purple candles
- 1 white candle
- Bethlehem- an outline made from paper, or a small city created with blocks

way to Bethlehem: the prophets, the Holy Family, the Shepherds, and the Magi. This method of telling the story of Jesus' birth is done liturgically rather than chronologically. To get a sense of how this story is told please reference *Young Children and Worship* by Sonya M. Stewart or follow along with weekly Godly Play story on [RezTV](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCReZChurchDC) (YouTube.com/RezChurchDC).

The liturgy for each week is nearly the same, starting with a hymn and the lighting of the candle. Each week we will add a verse to the hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel", we will add a candle to be lit, and we will add to the people on the road to Bethlehem. Before Advent begins gather the materials you would like to use to create the road to Bethlehem. Having a space and something tactile for the children to play with freely gives them a visual and physical reminder of the stories we encounter on the road to Bethlehem.

Following the Daily Liturgy is a Monday-Saturday outline of scripture reading and questions for both children and parents.

Questions for Children: Lead your kids through an exercise of imagining the scene, making the Scripture come alive through 'I wonder' questions. As written in *Following*

Jesus by Sonya M. Stewart: "Wondering together is a way of remaining open to the Holy Spirit, a way of meditating so the story becomes a part of the group's life. Wondering shapes and deepens our knowledge of God and what God desires of us. This knowing grows out of the children's experience of God, not from their being told what to believe about God."

Questions for Parents: Try to imagine the scene also. Ask yourself 'I wonder' questions. When we use our imagination and try to digest the words on the page, the passage clarifies in our mind and sinks down into our heart. If you have time, read a bit more of the passage to yourself. For each day, there are some prompting questions to help you do this. This is similar to Ignatian Meditation (If interested, read more here: <https://www.soulshepherding.org/ignatian-meditation-guides/>)

Seek & Wonder

Aside from the Daily Liturgy and Readings, there are the weekly suggestions: Each week the Seek & Wonder section will provide activity ideas, art, poetry, music, or an outing for your family. At the beginning of the week try to make a plan for which day your family will get out or create.

The purpose of the seek and wonder ideas are to help connect the scripture to something the children can experience. The hope is that engaging with art adds a layer to the Scripture of the week, so not only are you and your children reading Scripture together, but you are looking for the same themes within the art. You can listen to music and talk about what you hear that makes you think of waiting. You can read poetry and the words may give you more clues to how Mary and Joseph felt as they were on the road to Bethlehem. This multi-sensory approach has the potential to deepen our understanding and appreciation for the Scripture.

Feasting: "Taste and see that the Lord is good..." Psalm 34:8. Sunday is a feast day! As a way to mark Sunday as separate from other days, prepare and enjoy the recipes included for each week. Cooking and baking with children can both be fun and difficult, so use this as a special time to be with your family in a thoughtful way around food.

Music: There is even a difference between Advent and Christmas music. Try to hold off on the Christmas hymns till Christmas day. There is an Advent Seek and Wonder playlist on spotify with some beautiful Advent music.

Please note that if you find yourself unable to read the passage or get through the questions every day, that is fine. Monday and Tuesday will carry the strongest connection to the theme, so if you happen to miss Tuesday - Thursday, for example, just go back to Tuesday and read that passage. There is also a reality to family devotionals: sometimes they don't happen when or how we want. Receive grace when you need a break. Even if you do not get to the liturgy and Scripture every day, work on being mindful of the theme during the week. And where possible, invite your children to consider the theme in light of the suggested arts. For when children see art, hear poetry, and listen to music, their senses are engaged, and the themes are enlivened.

It is our hope that these materials will guide your family as you seek and wonder on the road to Bethlehem.

Throughout the Old Testament, we are shown our need for a savior. The prophets were the truth tellers in the Old Testament calling the Israelites to repentance. The prophets also pointed God's people to a future ruler and king, Jesus Christ. This week's scripture will focus on a few of the times in the Old Testament where Words about the coming King were spoken, and how those Words are fulfilled in the New Testament and in the Person of Christ.

Week 1

THE PROPHETS SHOW THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM

Week 1

THE PROPHETS SHOW THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM

This is the first week of Advent. This week we light the candle of the prophets. It is the candle of hope, to remind us that Jesus has come, and is coming, to bring light to a darkened world.

As you sing the Hymn, light one purple candle. Roll out purple fabric. Get out one wooden figure to represent the prophet.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

*"Come now
and see the
works of
God, how
wonderful
he is in
his doing
toward all
people."*

(PSALM 66:4)

DAILY LITURGY

Come now and see the works of God, how wonderful he is in his doing toward all people.
(Psalm 66:4)

I will watch expectantly for the LORD;
I will wait for the God of my salvation.
(Micah 7:7)

Pray Together:
Jesus, you are light even in the darkest places.
Help us to trust in you when we are lost or
lonely. Shine hope into our hearts we pray.
Amen

We are all on the road to Bethlehem
The Prophets show us the way to Bethlehem.
Our King and Savior now draws near
Oh come, let us adore him.

Read the scripture and wonder together with the questions provided on the following page

MONDAY—Isaiah 9:2, John 1:1-5

Questions for children:

I wonder what darkness feels like?

I wonder what it feels like to be in darkness and then to see a great light shine?

I wonder what light could shine so bright that darkness could not be more powerful than the light?

Parents: What darkness do you feel or see in the world around you during this Advent? Where do you see light? Talk to God about where you long to see His light in the darkness you experience this Advent.

TUESDAY—Isaiah 9:6-7

Questions for children:

Isaiah was telling the Israelites about the child that would be king, I wonder, how did the Prophets know this? How did they hear from God?

Parents: Meditate on these names, Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting Father, Mighty God, Prince of Peace. Which one connects with you today? Which one gives you comfort today? Which one challenges you today?

WEDNESDAY—Jeremiah 23:5-6

Questions for children:

I wonder what a good king is like?

I wonder what righteousness looks like?

I wonder what justice looks like?

I wonder how it feels to live under a just king?

Parents: What do you long to see in God's kingdom? How might God be calling to bring His kingdom here on earth this Advent?

THURSDAY—Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:4-6

Questions for children:

I wonder what the prophet Micah thought when he heard this?

I wonder if the prophet Micah thought he would see this ruler?

I wonder what it feels like to wait?

I wonder what the new ruler will be like?

Parents: Think about the passing of time between the prophets words and the actualization of those words. What are promises are you waiting for from God?

FRIDAY—Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1: 20-23

Questions for children:

I wonder what the prophet Isaiah thought when he heard this from God?

I wonder if Joseph had heard that scripture before?

I wonder why the child was to be named Emmanuel?

I wonder if you have ever felt God with you?

Parents: Meditate on the words "God with us". How would you like to see God with you today?

SATURDAY—Isaiah 11:1-3a;

Isaiah 11:1-3a; Matthew 1:6 & 17

Questions for children:

I wonder who Jesse is? I wonder what it feels like for the Spirit of the Lord to rest upon you?

Parents: Mediate on Isaiah 11:2-3.

Imagine the Spirit of the Lord resting upon you. What does that feel like in body and in your heart? Carry that image with you as you go about your day today.



Seek & Wonder

Planting

As a way to experience waiting, plant an Amaryllis Bulb or Paperwhite Bulbs during the first week of Advent. Watching these bulbs grow can be an ongoing activity and discussion with your children throughout Advent. These bulbs can be found at most garden stores in the winter. Both take about 3-6 weeks to bloom, which may happen during the Christmas season rather than Advent.

Create

Make a prophet's scroll to set beside your wooden figure prophet. Let your children choose one of the prophetic scriptures and have them write it on a piece of paper, roll it up and tie it with a string. Your child can write the whole thing, a few words, or a few letters depending on their

writing level. Set the scroll out with the prophet each week.

Observing Art

Enjoy some time at the National Gallery of Art to see and reflect on the painting, The Nativity with the Prophets Isaiah and Ezeikiel by Duccio di Buoninsegna. This piece of art can be viewed online at [NGA.gov](https://www.nga.gov).

Questions for your children:

- What do you see happening in this painting?
- Who do you see in this painting? Do you see anyone with a halo? What does that remind you of?
- Where would you want to be if you were in this painting?
- What do you feel when you look at this painting?

Remind them of the scripture you have been reading in the bible and that the painter must have known these stories too.

Mary and Joseph's story is intertwined and contrasted with Elizabeth and Zechariah's story in the first few chapters of the New Testament. We share these stories of faith with our children during the second week of Advent.

Week 2

MARY AND JOSEPH SHOW THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM

Week 2

MARY AND JOSEPH SHOW THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM

This is the second week of Advent. This week we light the first candle of Advent, the candle of the prophets. It is the candle of hope that reminds us that Jesus has come, and is coming, to bring light to a darkened world. We also light the second candle of Advent, the candle of Mary and Joseph. It is the candle of faith, it reminds us not to be afraid, but to have faith on the road to Bethlehem.

As you sing the Hymn, light two purple candles. Roll out purple fabric. Get out one wooden figure to represent the prophet. Get out two wooden figures and an animal to represent Mary, Joseph and their donkey.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

*"My soul
magnifies
the Lord, and
my spirit
rejoices in
God my
Savior"*

(LUKE 1:46)

DAILY LITURGY

Come now and see the works of God, how wonderful he is in his doing toward all people.
(Psalm 66:4)

I will watch expectantly for the LORD;
I will wait for the God of my salvation.
(Micah 7:7)

Pray Together:
Jesus, you are faithful in the midst of our ever changing world. Help us have faith like Mary and Joseph. Lord, we believe, help us in our unbelief. Amen.

We are all on the road to Bethlehem
The Prophets show us the way to Bethlehem.
Mary and Joseph show us the way to Bethlehem.

Our King and Savior now draws near
Oh come, let us adore him.

Read the scripture and wonder together with the questions provided on the following page

MONDAY—Luke 1:26-33, 46-47
(adults, read all of Mary's song, and reflect on Mary's song 46-55)

Questions for children:

I wonder how Mary felt when an angel spoke to her?

I wonder how was Mary called to have faith on the road to Bethlehem?

I wonder what it would be like to have God's special child, Jesus?

Parents: Read all of Mary's song (vs. 46-55) and meditate on the words. In what ways are you tempted to respond in fear to God's calling? How does your soul magnify God?

TUESDAY—Matthew 1:18-24

Questions for children: I wonder how Joseph felt when he heard from the angel in his dream?

I wonder how was Joseph called to have faith on the road to Bethlehem?

Parents: In what ways is God leading you? How is God calling you to obedience today?

WEDNESDAY—Luke 1:35-45

Questions for children: I wonder how Elizabeth felt when she saw Mary?

I wonder how Elizabeth's friends and neighbors felt when Elizabeth gave birth to John?

I wonder how Elizabeth and Zechariah demonstrated faith?

Parents: Meditate on Elizabeth's response in verse 43-45. How might your heart respond in the same way Elizabeth's did?

THURSDAY—Luke 2:1-6

Questions for children: I wonder how they felt on the way to Bethlehem?

I wonder what the road was like?

I wonder how long it took them to get to Bethlehem?

Parents: What do you remember from the birth of your first child? In what ways is God calling you to faith and obedience to Him as a parent?

FRIDAY—Luke 1:5-25

Questions for children: I wonder how it feels to be unable to talk?

I wonder why Zechariah couldn't talk?

I wonder how Zechariah felt when he saw an angel?

Parents: Who do you most identify with in their response to the angel: Mary, Joseph, or Zechariah?

SATURDAY—Luke 1:57-66

Questions for children: I wonder what Zechariah was thinking about until he could speak again?

I wonder how Zechariah and Elizabeth felt once Zechariah could speak?

I wonder what their friends and neighbors thought?

I wonder how are you called to have faith during this Advent season?

Parents: Read through to vs. 80, Meditate on the prophecy of Zechariah.

Seek & Wonder

Labyrinth

Take your children to one of the labyrinths in DC. The one at Georgetown Waterfront Park is in a public park which makes it easily accessible. Remind your children of the long journey that Mary and Joseph had to take to Bethlehem. One way to experience a labyrinth is to use the time of walking to the center and back out as a time of meditation. You might want to try to memorize parts of the scriptures read this week, or sing the hymn we have been singing everyday. Your children will want to run and skip through the path. After they have done that a few times, ask them to try the path slowly, putting one foot in front of the other.

Observing Art

Enjoy this art created by Sister Grace Remington of Mary and Eve and the poem that accompanies the image.

Questions for your children:

- Who do you see in this drawing?
- What do you see happening in this drawing?
- What do you feel when you look at this drawing?

Remind them of the scripture you have been reading in the bible and that the artist must have known these stories too.

“

My mother, my daughter, life-giving Eve
Do not be ashamed, do not grieve.

The former things have passed away
Our God has brought to us a New Day.
See, I am with Child, through whom all
will be reconciled.

O, Eve! My sister, my friend
We will rejoice together, forever
Life without end.”



Mary and Eve
Pencil and Ink by Sr Grace Remington
OCSO Copyright 2005

This week we learn about the shepherds the angels sent to see baby Jesus. Many main characters in the bible are shepherds, and Jesus says of himself that he is the Good Shepherd. These scriptures help us connect the shepherds at Jesus' birth and ourselves as Jesus' sheep.

Week 3

THE SHEPHERDS SHOW THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM

Week 3

THE SHEPHERDS SHOW THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM

This is the third week of Advent. This week we light the first candle of Advent, the candle of the prophets. It is the candle of hope, to remind us that Jesus has come, and is coming, to bring light to a darkened world. We also light the second candle of Advent, the candle of Mary and Joseph. It is the candle of faith, reminding us not to be afraid, but to have faith on the road to Bethlehem. And finally we light the third candle, the candle of Shepherds and the candle of joy. This candle reminds us of the joy the world experienced at the birth of Christ.

As you sing the Hymn, light three purple candles. Roll out purple fabric. Get out one wooden figure to represent the prophet. Get out two wooden figures and an animal to represent Mary, Joseph, and their donkey. Get out one wooden figure and an animal to represent a shepherd and a sheep.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, O come, Thou, Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

*"Let us
go over to
Bethlehem
and see this
thing that
has happened,
which the
Lord has
made known
to us."*

(LUKE 2:15)

DAILY LITURGY

Come now and see the works of God, how
wonderful he is in his doing toward all people.
(Psalm 66:4)

I will watch expectantly for the LORD;
I will wait for the God of my salvation.
(Micah 7:7)

Pray Together:
Jesus, you are joy even in the saddest times.
Help us to praise you when we are upset or
grieving. Shine joy into our hearts we pray.
Amen.

We are all on the road to Bethlehem
The Prophets show us the way to Bethlehem.
Mary and Joseph show us the way to
Bethlehem.
The Shepherds show us the way to Bethlehem
Our King and Savior now draws near
Oh come, let us adore him.

*Read the scripture and wonder together with
the questions provided on the following page*

MONDAY—Luke 2: 8-15

Questions for children:

I wonder how the Shepherds felt when an angel spoke to them?

I wonder how they felt on their way to Bethlehem?

Parents: Try to imagine this scene. What emotions does the image bring-- fear, joy, excitement?

TUESDAY—Psalm 23: 1-4

Questions for children: I wonder what it is like to be a shepherd?

I wonder what it is like to be a sheep?

I wonder in what ways we are like sheep?

I wonder in what ways Jesus is like a shepherd?

Parents: In what ways are you being shepherded? In what ways do you want to be shepherded?

WEDNESDAY—John 10:11-16

Questions for children: I wonder if the Good Shepherd's sheep have names?

I wonder how the Good Shepherd feels about his sheep?

Parents: Imagine hearing these words from Jesus. Imagine his posture and tone. When do you hear the Good Shepherd's voice?

THURSDAY—Psalm 78: 70-72

Questions for children: I wonder, can you remember any shepherds in the Old Testament who were kings?

I wonder how a shepherd is like a king?

I wonder what this makes you think of Jesus?

Parents: Which image of Christ, the king or the shepherd, do you find most comforting, which is more challenging? Take some time to talk with God about how these images resonate with you.

FRIDAY—Ezekiel 34:11-24

Questions for children: I wonder where this mountain is?

I wonder how many sheep will be there?

I wonder where all these sheep came from?

I wonder in what ways are we like sheep?

Parents: Read verse 14 over and over and imagine the place. Where is that resting place for you? Meet Jesus there this morning.

SATURDAY—Isaiah 40:11

Questions for children: I wonder how it feels to be carried in the arms of the Good Shepherd?

I wonder why the shepherds show us the way to Bethlehem?

I wonder what will happen when they find Jesus?

Parents: As you shepherd your own children, how do you see God caring for you? How is God gently leading you this Advent season?

Seek & Wonder

Vist

Visit the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to view the decorations and two manger scenes (one is almost life size!). As you walk through the grand space look for other signs of people being on the road to Bethlehem. What stories do your children want to tell as they look at the creche, as well as at the stained glass windows and mosaics? The National Cathedral and the Franciscan Monastery will also have creches on display.

Listen

G.F. Handel's Messiah, No. 13 Pifa Pastoral Symphony.

This instrumental symphony comes from Part 1, Scene 4 (The Advent) of Handel's Messiah: the Annunciation to the Shepherds, in the Gospel of Luke. Listen to the piece as a family. For Upper Elementary children, invite them to close their eyes and reflect with you. For little ones, invite them to play quietly with the nativity or dance as you take a moment to reflect.

As you listen, what images come to mind? How does your body and heart respond to the melody, rhythm, dissonance and resolution of the music? In what ways does the piece reflect the longing and hope of the Advent season?

Create

If you don't have sheep to add to your scene for the week, let your children make some to add.

Materials: Cardboard, and a string of white/cream yarn.

- Cut out from the cardboard a small sheep shape.
- Tape one end of the yarn to the sheep and then wrap the yarn around the sheep and secure with tape once the sheep is covered.
- Cut out two half circles with a slot at the top to rest the sheep shape on.



Sourced from:
<https://www.sunhatsandwellieboots.com/2012/12/weave-your-own-woolly-sheep.html>

The Magi traveled the farthest on the road to Bethlehem. They traveled from a far off land to present gifts to a child they understood to be the new king. We don't know much of their journey, but their reverence for the baby king is an example to us as we prepare to worship Jesus on Christmas.

Week 4

THE MAGI SHOW THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM

Week 4

THE MAGI SHOW THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM

This is the fourth week of Advent. This week we light the first candle of Advent, the candle of the prophets. It is the candle of hope, to remind us that Jesus has come, and is coming, to bring light to a darkened world. We also light the second candle of Advent, the candle of Mary and Joseph. It is the candle of faith, reminding us not to be afraid, but to have faith on the road to Bethlehem. Next, we light the third candle, the candle of Shepherds and the candle of joy. This candle reminds us of the joy the world experienced at the birth of Christ. And finally we light the fourth candle, the candle of the Magi and the candle of love. This candle reminds us of God's gift of Christ, the newborn king. God loved the world so much that he sent His only son Jesus, to be our King and Savior.

As you sing the Hymn, light four purple candles. Roll out purple fabric. Get out one wooden figure to represent the prophet. Get out two wooden figures and an animal to represent Mary, Joseph, and their donkey. Get out one wooden figure and an animal to represent a shepherd and a sheep. Get out three wooden figures to represent the Magi.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, O come, Thou, Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, thou Day-spring from on high,
And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

*"They saw
the young
child with
Mary his
mother,
and fell
down, and
worshipped
him"*

(MATTHEW 2:11)

DAILY LITURGY

Come now and see the works of God, how
wonderful he is in his doing toward all people.
(Psalm 66:4)

I will watch expectantly for the LORD;
I will wait for the God of my salvation.
(Micah 7:7)

Pray Together:
Jesus, you are love even if we are afraid. Help
us to pray to you when we are scared or fearful.
Bring Your love into our hearts we pray.
Amen

We are all on the road to Bethlehem
The Prophets show us the way to Bethlehem.
Mary and Joseph show us the way to
Bethlehem.
The Shepherds show us the way to Bethlehem.
The Magi show us the way to Bethlehem.
Our King and Savior now draws near
Oh come, let us adore him.

Read the scripture and wonder together with
the questions provided on the following page

MONDAY—Matthew 2:1-12

Questions for children:

I wonder how the Magi felt when they saw the special star for a king?

I wonder if it was hard for them to find the special king?

I wonder why the Magi brought gifts?

I wonder what it's like to be a baby and a king?

I wonder what kind of king baby Jesus will be?

Parents: How would you feel about receiving these gifts on behalf of your child? What gifts are you bringing to Jesus?

TUESDAY—Psalm 72: 1-11

Questions for children:

I wonder who this Psalm is describing?

I wonder where this king is?

I wonder why other kings will bow down to this king?

I wonder where Tarshish, Sheba, and Seba are?

I wonder what gifts they will bring the king?

Parents: How would it look for this king to bless us in the 21st century? What would it look like for this king to bless you? What gifts might you bring King Jesus as you prepare to meet him this Christmas?

WEDNESDAY—Genesis 22:17-18

In the Old Testament, God makes a promise to Abraham, through Abraham's family (more numerous than the stars) the whole world will be blessed. In the star of Bethlehem and the journey of the wiseman, we see the beginning of how God will fulfill that promise in Jesus.

Questions for children:

I wonder how the nations will be blessed?

I wonder how many stars were in the sky? I wonder if any of the stars were as bright as the star the Magi followed?

Parents: The magi came to worship the baby Jesus and give him gifts, they were the first of the nations to see Jesus as king. The blessing on Abraham is fulfilled by Jesus. Imagine the night sky or go look at the night sky. Can you wonder what it was like for the magi to be led by the stars. How do you think Abraham felt when he received that blessing from God, imagine him beginning to understand all that the blessing would entail.

THURSDAY—Phillippians 2:8-11

Questions for children:

I wonder what it was like for the king of kings Jesus, to be born as a little baby?

I wonder how the magi felt bowing down, kneeling before a baby who was also a king?

I wonder, how does it feel to know that king Jesus, who one day every knee will bow to, came to earth to live among us?

Parents: I wonder, were the magi surprised by the baby king they found and his humble circumstances? They knelt before him, worshiped him, and bestowed upon him extravagant gifts despite his humble surroundings. Meditate on their response to Jesus and how it might shape your response to worshipping Christ this Christmas.

Reread the passage for today. What attributes and truths about Christ stand out to you as you prepare your heart for Christmas? How does this passage challenge you as we live in the «in between» of the first Advent and second Advent when Christ will come again?



Poetry Reading

Read aloud T.S. Eliot's "The Journey of the Magi" to your children, or have one of your older children read it. You can read it at the dinner table or make a special evening with candles and snacks and host a 'poetry reading'. Help your children wonder about this poem and the additional story it tells of the Magi's journey.

The Journey Of The Magi by T.S. Eliot

A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'
And the camels galled, sorefooted, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
and running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,

And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

T.S. Eliot, Collected Poems, 1909-1962

Seek & Wonder

Play

Three Wise Men Play Dough



Materials Needed:

- Frankincense and myrrh essential oils
- Hair conditioner
- Corn starch
- Gold glitter

Additional Items for play:

- Wood People (add felt crowns with hot glue)
- Gold Glass Beads

Recipe:

Mix together ½ cup of hair conditioner, 1 to 1 ½ cups of cornstarch, and food coloring for the play dough.

For the frankincense play dough add a couple drops of yellow food coloring and glitter.

For the myrrh play dough add a few drops each of green, blue, red, and yellow to make a brown color. Then use corresponding essential oils.

Sourced from: <https://www.growinghandsonkids.com/three-wise-men-play-dough-invitation-to-play.html>

Seek & Wonder

Listen

Listen to the choral piece “O Magnum Mysterium” by Morten Lauridsen, it’s a contemporary choral piece often sung during Christmas Eve midnight Mass. As you listen to the piece, ponder the mystery of the nativity and allow the piece to prepare your heart for Christmas. Below is an english translation of the latin lyrics for further meditation.

O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the newborn Lord,
lying in a manger!
Blessed is the virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear
the Lord, Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!

As you listen, what feelings and images come to mind? How does the melody, harmony, and dissonance reflect the meaning of the song? As we close the Advent season and Christmas Eve is upon us, how does the song lead you in worship and wonder of Christ?

We have all been on a journey to Bethlehem. Today is Christmas, the day we celebrate the mystery of God becoming a baby. Today we are all at Bethlehem to meet the Christ child, the special Son of God.

Christmas Day

Christmas Day

Today is Christmas Day. Today we light the Christ candle. It reminds us that Christ is Light. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Light all four purple candles and the white candle.

Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord has come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found
Far as, far as the curse is found

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love, and wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders of His love

*"For unto
you is born
this day in
the city of
David a
Savior, who
is Christ the
Lord."*

(LUKE 2:11)

LITURGY

Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
(Luke 2:10-11)

Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the Lord;
shout for joy, all who are true of heart.
(Psalm 32:12)

Pray Together:
Jesus, you came to be light in our darkness.
Jesus, you came to be peace in our conflicts.
Jesus, you came to be joy in our sadness, and to bring your love into our fears. Today we celebrate your birth. Thank you for your saving grace. Amen

Today is Christmas, the day we celebrate the mystery of God becoming a baby.
Today we are all at Bethlehem to meet the Christ child, the special son of God.

Alleluia, for unto us a child is born,
Unto us a son is given. Alleluia

Read the scripture and wonder together with the questions provided on the following page

CHRISTMAS DAY—Luke 2:11-14

Questions for children:

I wonder how it feels to be in Bethlehem?

I wonder how this little baby is a light to the whole world, a light no darkness can overcome?

I wonder how all these people and animals feel about the baby?

I wonder how Jesus feels about the people and animals?

I wonder how God feels?

Parents: Try to find a moment of peace on this busy and joyful day to join the angels in glorifying the Christ child. Worship Jesus in the way that you feel led today.

Christmas Tide

After weeks of preparation we now celebrate with great joy the birth of Jesus. We all made it to Bethlehem; we followed the Magi, the shepherds, and the holy family! As we celebrate, we celebrate with Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and the Magi. During the 12 days of Christmas find moments for joy, moments to wonder, and moments to seek God's kingdom here on earth.

Ideas for celebrating Christmastide:

- Keep your tree and decorations up until January 6th, and consider replacing some of your purple Advent decor around the Nativity with colors of white and gold.
- Sing Christmas carols and continue listening to Christmas music until Epiphany.
- Consider spreading out the gift-giving throughout the 12 days of Christmas, so that not every gift is opened on Christmas morning.
- Plan 1 or 2 special activities with your children, like an outing to a Christmas display, attending a Christmas concert or performance.
- Continue to light candles each night you could light one candle for each of the 12 days of Christmas.
- Go on a hike and enjoy God's creation.
- Spend one night going star-gazing and meditating on the wise-men and their pilgrimage.
- Host a party on the eve of Epiphany. In some traditions this includes a bonfire of the Christmas greenery.



FEASTING Week 1

Sugar cookies can be a fun (and messy) activity during Advent. Consider using star and candle shaped cutters for most of your cookies-- these will help everyone remember the theme of light from Advent. This week we talked about the prophets showing us the way to Bethlehem when they declared that Jesus, the light of humankind is coming.

In a few weeks we will talk about the star that guides the shepherds and the Magi to Bethlehem. As you and your children bake star-shaped cookies and eat them over the week, remind them of the light of Jesus.

Sugar Cookies

Source: Recipe from In Katrina's Kitchen

Ingredients:

- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup granulated white sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp almond extract
- 1 egg
- 2 tsps baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 3 cups all purpose flour

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. In the bowl of your mixer, mix cream butter and sugar until smooth, at least 3 minutes.
3. Beat in extracts and egg.
4. In a separate bowl combine baking powder and salt with flour.
5. Add dry mixture a little at a time to the wet ingredients. The dough will be very stiff. If it becomes too stiff for your mixer, turn out the dough onto a countertop surface. Wet your hands and finish off kneading the dough by hand.

6. Do not chill the dough! Divide into workable batches, roll out onto a floured surface and cut. You want these cookies to be on the thicker side (closer to ¼" rather than ⅛").
7. Bake at 350° F for 6-8 minutes. Let cool on the cookie sheet until firm enough to transfer to a cooling rack.

Notes:

You can use salted butter (just take out the 1/2 teaspoon salt). In the past I've omitted the salt and the recipe is fine. It is more bland but these cookies are made for frosting.

If you must chill the dough, just leave it on the counter top for 10 minutes before rolling or work the dough with your hands for a few minutes.

You can omit the almond extract if you do not have it available, however the taste is really fantastic with the hint of almond.

Keep in mind that the recipe yield (3 dozen) will vary according to how thick you roll your cookies and how large or small your cutters are.

Bake for 6 minutes to test. They should be soft. Leave them on the baking sheet for 5 minutes before transferring to cool completely. If you reach 7-8 minutes and the edges turn brown your cookie will be crisper.



FEASTING
Week 2

Photo by Mary Copley on Unsplash

Oven Roasted Middle Eastern Chicken

Ingredients:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 2 tsp smoked paprika | 1 tsp salt |
| 2 tsp ground cumin | 4 tbsp fresh lemon juice |
| 1/2 tsp ground turmeric | 1/2 cup olive oil |
| 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon | 2 cloves garlic minced |
| 1/8 tsp ground nutmeg | 1 lb chicken breasts boneless and skinless |
| 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper | 1 onion sliced into wedges |

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 425F.
1. In a large bowl whisk together the spices, lemon juice, olive oil, and garlic. Add in the chicken and onions and give everything a good mix, making sure the chicken is well coated.
 2. Add everything to a baking dish and pop into the preheated oven for 40-45 mins, or until the chicken is brown and crispy on the edges.
 3. Once cooked, remove the chicken from the oven and allow to rest for about 5 mins before cutting it into slices.



FEASTING
Week 3

Photo by Anita Austvika on Unsplash

Shepherds Pie

Source: Gimme Some Oven

Ingredients:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 tablespoon olive oil | 2 tablespoons tomato paste |
| 1.25 pounds ground beef | 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce |
| 1 medium white onion, peeled and diced | 2 bay leaves |
| 8 ounces baby bella or white button mushrooms, finely diced | 2 sprigs each fresh rosemary and thyme (or whatever herbs you love) |
| 2 medium carrots, finely diced | 1/2 cup frozen peas |
| 2 stalks celery, finely diced | sea salt and freshly-cracked black pepper |
| 4 cloves garlic, peeled and minced | 1 batch mashed potatoes (see below) |
| 1/4 cup all-purpose flour | 2.5 pounds potatoes (either Russets, Yukon golds, or a mix of the two) |
| 1/2 cup dry red wine (or you can sub in more beef stock instead) | 1/4 cup butter |
| 2 cups beef stock (or vegetable or chicken stock) | 1/2 cup whole milk, or more as needed |
| | 2 ounces cream cheese (or 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt) |
| | Sea salt and freshly-cracked black pepper |

Instructions:

1. Cook the mashed potatoes. Once they are ready to go, remove from heat and set aside until ready to use.
2. Brown the beef (or lamb). Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the ground beef (or lamb) and cook until browned, crumbling it with a wooden spoon as it cooks. Transfer the cooked beef to a separate plate with a wooden spoon and set aside, reserving any grease in the sauté pan that it has left behind. (Or if there is no leftover grease, add an extra tablespoon of oil to the pan.)
3. Sauté the veggies. Add the onion and sauté for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the carrots, celery, mushrooms, garlic and sauté for 5-7 minutes longer, stirring occasionally, until softened.

Shepherds Pie Instructions Cont’d.

4. Add in the flour and wine. Stir the flour in with the veggie mixture until evenly combined, then continue to sauté for 1 minute longer, stirring frequently. Stir in the wine, then use a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits that are stuck to the bottom of the pan.
5. Add the remaining sauce ingredients. Immediately stir in the stock, tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce, bay leaf, herb sprigs and frozen peas until combined. Continue cooking until the mixture reaches a simmer. Then reduce heat to medium-low to maintain a low simmer, and continue cooking for 5 more minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove and discard the bay leaves and herb sprigs. Stir in the cooked meat Taste and season the mixture with salt and pepper as needed.
6. Layer it all up. Transfer the filling mixture to a 9 x 13-inch baking dish and spread it out in an even layer. Spoon the mashed potatoes on top and carefully spread them out in an even layer as well.
7. Bake. Bake uncovered at 400°F for about 20 minutes, or until the potatoes are lightly golden and the filling has started to bubble up around the edges. (If you would like the potatoes to be a bit more browned, you can turn on the broiler for 1 or 2 extra minutes, keeping a close eye on the potatoes so that they do not burn.)
8. Garnish and serve. Remove the baking dish from the oven, sprinkle a few extra herbs on top if you would like, then dish up your servings while the shepherd’s pie is still nice and warm. Or store the pie in sealed containers in the refrigerator for up to 3 days, or freeze for up to 3 months.



Spiced Apple Cider

Source: www.gettystewart.com

Mulling Spice Packets

1. Gather your favorite mulling spices, bakers’ string and some cheesecloth (or coffee filters and twine). I used allspice berries, dried orange peel, whole cloves, whole green cardamom pods, cinnamon sticks, candied or fresh ginger, black peppercorns and star anise. Of course, you can use whatever you have available or whatever flavors you prefer. Star anise tastes a little bit like licorice or fennel. Cardamom has a unique spicy/savory/ sweet flavor that goes very well with cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger.
2. Cut 5"x5" or 6"x6" squares of double layered cheesecloth. (Or use coffee filters)
3. On each square add your favourite spice combination in approximately these proportions:

- 4 cloves
 - 4 allspice berries
 - 4 peppercorns
 - 2 cinnamon sticks broken into pieces
 - 1/2 tbsp dried orange peel
 - 2 cardamom pods
 - 2 star anise pods
 - 1/2 tsp candied or fresh ginger
4. Bring the four corners of the cheesecloth square together and tie with bakers’ string.
5. Place sachets in a container, decorate and label.

Cooking Directions

Pour 1 quart (1 litre) of cider, pure apple juice, or cranberry juice into a large pot. Add one sachet of mulling spices and simmer (not boil) on the stove for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to its lowest setting to keep warm.



THE CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

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Advent-Seek and Wonder



Seek and Wonder

#seekandwonderontheroadtoBethlehem