



Presbyterian
**Children
& Families**
Ministry

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A Kids Friendly Advent



Worship Together
And More...





This document is intended as a resource for the Church. The information it contains is not prescriptive. The Book of Order and its subordinate standards contain the Church's official rules and directions. Any perceived conflict between the information contained in this resource and the Church's Book of Order and subordinate standards is entirely unintentional.

Introduction

Advent is a wonderful opportunity to fully involve children in the first half of your worship service and then follow up your activities and lesson in church with some fun Christmas crafts in your children's programme. Too many of our children, even church goers, still forget the real reason for the season. Try these activities and ideas to remind the children and families of your faith community that Advent is a time to prepare for the coming of Christ TOGETHER! A time of hope, joy, peace and love.

Enjoy!

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1. INVOLVING CHILDREN IN ADVENT WORSHIP

BACKGROUND ON THE ADVENT WREATH AND CANDLES

The beginning of Advent is a time for the [hanging of the green](#), decoration of the church with evergreen wreaths, boughs, or trees that help to symbolize the new and everlasting life brought through Jesus the Christ.

The Advent wreath is a symbol of the beginning of the Church year. It is a circular evergreen wreath with five candles, four around the wreath and one in the centre.



The **circle of the wreath** reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end.

The **green of the wreath** speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life.

Candles symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son. It also reminds us that we are called to be a light to the world as we reflect the light of God's grace to others (Isa 42:6).

The **four outer candles** represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent, which themselves symbolize the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ.

The **colours of the candles** vary with different traditions, but there are usually three purple candles, and one pink candle and a white candle in the centre (or the outer candles may be red). Each Sunday of Advent one of the candles is lit, a Scripture is read, a short reading is given, and a prayer offered. Each Sunday, the previous candle is relit with the additional one.

The **first candle** is traditionally the candle of **Hope** (or prophecy). This draws attention to the anticipation of the coming of an Anointed One, a Messiah, that weaves its way through Old Testament history.

The second candle is the candle of **Peace**. Jesus is our peace.

The third candle is the candle of **Joy** - the angels sang a message of JOY!

The fourth candle is the candle of love– the angels announced the good news of a Savior sent to us by God because He loves us! *“For God so loved the world... (John 3:16-17)*

The **centre candle** is white and is called the **Christ Candle**. It is traditionally lit on Christmas Day. The **central location of the Christ Candle** reminds us that the incarnation is the heart of the season, giving light to the world.

CELEBRATING ADVENT@HOME

Advent is an ideal Christian festival to be observed in the home as well as at church. In its association with Christmas, Advent is a natural time to involve children in activities at home that directly connect with worship at church and the preparation for the birth of Jesus.

An **Advent** Calendar is a way to keep children involved in the entire season. See our **Kids Friendly Advent calendar** to help children reflect and act on bringing hope, peace, joy and love to their communities.

For more ideas on encouraging families to celebrate Advent@Home see **An Advent Event** (from Highgate Presbyterian).



READINGS AND CANDLE LIGHTING

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

(Readers should include at least one child and preferably more, who can read with their parent or a teenager)

Reader 1: The things we get for Christmas will not last as long as the things we get from Christmas. We will finish our Christmas treats, get bored with our Christmas toys and grow out of our Christmas clothes. But the things we get from Christ this Christmas and always - hope, peace, joy and love - will go with us all our life.

Reader 2: Why do we light the Advent candles?

Reader 1: The first Advent candle is the candle of the prophets. It stands for Hope.

Reader 2: Jesus is our hope. He died on the cross to save us and gives us everlasting life. "The light of hope shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out."

Reader 1: We light this candle for hope (lights the first candle)

Prayer said by all:

Creator God, on this first Sunday in Advent you call us to waken and watch for your coming again. May we wait for Christ's coming with hope in our hearts, hope that this Christmas your kingdom will come more fully in our lives. Amen.

Advent Song: "A Candle is Burning" by Sandra Dean, Ottawa
(words adapted by Rev Cate Burton and Penny Merton, St Peter's Tauranga, PCANZ to make it more "Kiwi")
Tune: Away in a manger

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright;
A candle of **Hope** in the darkest of night.
Though troubled and worried yet we will not fear.
Our hearts are now hopeful, for Jesus is near.



A “SUNDAY SCHOOL” ACTIVITY for the FIRST SUNDAY in ADVENT

The attached family Advent calendar can be printed on A3 paper (either in black and white or colour).

<http://www.kidsfriendly.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Advent-calendar-for-families2.pdf>

Children can decorate it with a border and write their family name in the space provided. Laminate it (if you have a laminator) and give them instructions ie Make an advent wreath with four candles in a ring and one in the middle.

Choose a night with your family when you will light the candle for the week and talk about how you can bring Jesus into your world.

Light the Christ candle in the middle (and all the others) on Christmas day.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT



Reader 1: The things we get for Christmas will not last as long as the things we get from Christmas. We will finish our Christmas treats, get bored with our Christmas toys and grow out of our Christmas clothes. But the things we get from Christ this Christmas and always - hope, peace, joy and love - will go with us all our life.

Reader 2: Why do we light the Advent candles?

Reader 3: The first Advent candle is the candle of HOPE. Jesus is our hope. He died on the cross to save us and give us everlasting life. "The light of hope shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out."

Reader 2: We light this candle for hope (lights the first candle)

Reader 3: The second candle is the candle of John the Baptist who remembered Isaiah's prophecy of PEACE. For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulders and his name shall be called wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Jesus is our peace. His peace is deep within us, reaches out to friends and strangers and brings justice to our world.

Reader 2: We light this candle for peace

Prayer said by all:

Dear God, thank you that even though there is no special star in the sky or angels singing, there is a real sense of your peace within us at Christmas time. Thank you that you are always with us sharing in our good and bad times and giving us your peace. Amen.



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(words adapted by Rev Cate Burton and Penny Merton, St Peter's Tauranga, PCANZ to make it more "Kiwi") - Tune: Away in a manger

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright;
A candle of **Hope** in the darkest of night.
Though troubled and worried yet we will not fear.
Our hearts are now hopeful, for Jesus is near.

A candle is burning, a candle of **Peace**;
A beacon to signal that conflict must cease.
For Jesus is coming to show us the way;
A koha, a taonga is laid in the hay.

PUTTING GOD FIRST – A STORY

You will need an empty jam jar, one LARGE marble and lots of smaller ones. Whose got a dance show coming up? Or a prize giving? What about a Christmas party or an end of year assembly? Who's practising for a Christmas pageant? Who needs to still do their Christmas shopping? Boy Christmas is a busy time. Sometimes we get so busy at this time of year that it's quite difficult to fit God into our lives at all. We want to but there just isn't time to do everything. It's rather like these marbles in the jar.

(Each time someone says yes to your questions, you could give them a marble. When you have given out heaps of marbles, pass the jar around and ask them to drop all the marbles in the jar until it is nearly full, and try and put the lid on.)

All these things we do are the marbles. Now let's try and put God in *(put the large marble on top)*

.....Oh dear, there just isn't room for God as well. *(pause.....)*

I know, lets see what happens if we put God in first.

(Tip all the marbles out on to a tray so you can be seen not to lose any and put the large marble in first. Then put in the smaller ones and fill the jar completely).

Wonderful! If you put God first in your life, then everything else will fall into place.

At Godzone last week we made something to help families remember to put God first in their lives over the next few weeks. Look here's Blake's one. It's a bit like a family Advent calendar. You may remember we looked at an Advent calendar last week. If you don't have one for your family, ask your Godzone leader for one today and you can decorate it at home and light the Advent candles with your family. It will help you to remember to make space for God during this really busy time.

So remember even when you get really busy, put God into your life first and He will help you fit all the other things in too.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Reader 1: The things we get for Christmas will not last as long as the things we get from Christmas. We will finish our Christmas treats, get bored with our Christmas toys and grow out of our Christmas clothes. But the things we get from Christ this Christmas and always - hope, peace, joy and love - will go with us all our life.



Reader 2: Why do we light the Advent candles?

Reader 3: The first Advent candle is the candle of HOPE. Jesus is our hope. He died on the cross to save us and give us everlasting life. "The light of hope shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out."

Reader 2: We light this candle for hope (lights the first candle)

Reader 3: The second candle is the candle of PEACE. Jesus is our peace. His peace is deep within us, reaches out to friends and strangers and brings justice to our world.

Reader 2: We light this candle for peace.

Reader 3: The third candle is the candle of JOY. The miracle of Christmas is that even though there is so much sadness in the world, the joy of Christ deep within us can help us reach out to the sad, the suffering and the lonely.

Reader 2: We light this candle for JOY

Prayer said by all:

Dear God, thank you that through you we can always find joy. Help us to bring joy to our world by loving others the way you taught us. Amen.

Advent Song: "A Candle is Burning" by Sandra Dean, Ottawa
(words adapted by Rev Cate Burton and Penny Merton, St Peter's Tauranga, PCANZ to make it more "Kiwi") - Tune: Away in a manger

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright;
A candle of **Hope** in the darkest of night.
Though troubled and worried yet we will not fear.
Our hearts are now hopeful, for Jesus is near.

A candle is burning, a candle of **Peace**;
A beacon to signal that conflict must cease.
For Jesus is coming to show us the way;
A koha, a taonga is laid in the hay.

A candle is burning, a candle of **Joy**;
A warm glow to welcome brave Mary's new boy.
New life like a koru now being unfurled.
God's promise of joy to an expectant world.

JESUS LOLLIES AND THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Who knows how many days it is until Christmas?

Yep it's ? days to the birthday of a very special person. Who knows who that very special person is? Yes, Jesus.

You know when a mum is going to have a new baby things get very exciting towards the end. Who can remember when their mum was going to have a new baby? Can you remember that that is the only thing that gets talked about. Everyone keeps asking "how many days now" and the family is very busy preparing for the new baby. There's the room to paint and decorate, new clothes to buy, names to choose. It's a busy time.

It's a lot like that at Christmas. We are also preparing for the birth of the baby Jesus and sometimes we can get so busy that we forget about Jesus and just think of all the things we have to do. That's why it's so important that we come to church during this busy time, so we can be reminded of the story of Jesus birth and remember how Jesus brings hope, peace, joy and love into our lives.

I have a little lolly in my hand. (show them a m&m lolly). You'll have to come really close to see it. Who can see what letter is on the lolly.

M – an M

E – an E

W – a W

3 – and now it's a 3

That's a pretty tricky lolly hey! Who knows what it's called? No it's not an m&m. It's called a Jesus lolly because it reminds us of Jesus during this very busy time.

You see M stands for another name for Jesus. What could it be? – yes M could be for Messiah or Magi or even Manger where he lay.

The E is for the East where the star shone so bright.

The 3 is for the Wisemen who came to see the baby at night.

And W is for Worship, which is what we do today.

Sp next time you go to the shops with your mum, ask her to buy you some Jesus lollies and remember the real reason for Christmas.

SUNDAY SCHOOL ACTIVITY

(We made little card baskets and had this poem printed on the bottom – we iced biscuits cut in Christmas shapes and stuck Jesus lollies onto them).



M&M CHRISTMAS STORY

Before you bite your 'bic-cy',
check out the lolly and you will see
The M become a W, an E and then a 3.

They tell the Christmas story,
It's one I'm sure you know.

It took place in a stable a long, long time ago.

The E is for the East,
where the star shone oh so bright.

The M is for the Manger,
where the baby Jesus slept that night.

The 3 is for the Wisemen bearing gifts,
they say they came.

W is for Worship, Hallelujah praise to his name.
So eat these M&M cookies or share them with a
friend

And remember the spirit of Christmas and never let it end.



FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Reader 1: The things we get for Christmas will not last as long as the things we get from Christmas. We will finish our Christmas treats, get bored with our Christmas toys and grow out of our Christmas clothes. But the things we get from Christ this Christmas and always - hope, peace, joy and love - will go with us all our life.

Reader 2: Why do we light the Advent candles?

Reader 3: The first Advent candle is the candle of HOPE.
Jesus is our hope. He died on the cross to save us and give us everlasting life. "The light of hope shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out."

Reader 2: We light this candle for hope (lights the first candle)

Reader 3: The second candle is the candle of PEACE.
Jesus is our peace. His peace is deep within us, reaches out to friends and strangers and brings justice to our world.

Reader 2: We light this candle for peace.

Reader 3: The third candle is the candle of JOY.
Jesus is our Joy. The joy of Christ deep within us can help us reach out to the sad, the suffering and the lonely.

Reader 2: We light this candle for JOY

Reader 3: The fourth candle is the candle of LOVE.
Jesus is our LOVE. He is with us always and loves us unconditionally through all the events in our lives – in birth and death, in joy and sorrow.

Reader 2: We light this candle for LOVE

Prayer said by all:

Dear God, thank you that you love us so much even when we turn away from you. Thank you for sending us your son Jesus to show us how to live lives of love. Help us to be aware of your love and share it with others always. Amen.

Advent Song: "A Candle is Burning" by Sandra Dean, Ottawa
(words adapted by Rev Cate Burton and Penny Merton, St Peter's Tauranga, PCANZ to make it more "Kiwi") - Tune: Away in a manger

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright;
A candle of **Hope** in the darkest of night.
Though troubled and worried yet we will not fear.
Our hearts are now hopeful, for Jesus is near.

A candle is burning, a candle of **Peace**;
A beacon to signal that conflict must cease.
For Jesus is coming to show us the way;
A koha, a taonga is laid in the hay.

A candle is burning, a candle of **Joy**;
A warm glow to welcome brave Mary's new boy.
New life like a koru now being unfurled.
God's promise of joy to an expectant world.

A candle is burning, a flame strong and sure
Reminds us that God's **Love** will always endure.
Deep love like the ocean, steady as the tide.
Great love which comes to us with arms open wide.

(And for Christmas day after lighting the Christ candle)

A candle is burning, for the Christ has come.
The fullness of God dwells in this precious one.
A child is born who has good news to tell.
Ihu Karaiti, Emmanuel.

GOD'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT – A VISUAL STORY

You'll Need: a Bible; the baby Jesus from a nativity scene, wrapped in a box as a present.

What have you been doing to get ready for Christmas? How have you decorated for Christmas at your house? Have you put up your tree yet? It's an exciting time or year, isn't it?

What's the best Christmas present you've ever given someone? What's the best Christmas present you've ever received? Do you know about the Christmas present that God gave us?

I have a present here that will remind us about God's wonderful Christmas present to us. Have a child open the wrapped box and take out the baby Jesus figure. Show the figure to all the children. Then open your Bible to Luke 1:31. (you could print it on the PowerPoint)

The Bible says God sent Jesus as a gift to us. Luke 1:31-32 tells us what God's angel said to Mary when he first told her she was going to have a baby. Listen to what the Bible says: *"You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."*

Jesus, is the reason we celebrate Christmas every year. In the bible it also says that Jesus is a gift from God. In Romans 6:23 it says: "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Isn't that wonderful? God has given us such a precious gift in Jesus. Jesus is our way of living forever with God. That's the best gift of all! Did you ever notice that the first part of the word Christmas is Christ? That's because we're celebrating the gift of Christ!

(Give each child a present Christmas decoration). I have a little Christmas present decoration for each of you to hang on your tree or in your room to remind you that very best gift we'll ever get is God's gift of Jesus.

Let us pray:

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus as a gift to us. Thank you that He loves us so much and He teaches us how to love others. Thank you for letting us celebrate Jesus' birth each year with Christmas. Help us to remember that the greatest gift we get this and every Christmas is Jesus.



2. A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN - A MESSAGE FOR ALL (as told by Jill)

Can anyone tell me what special time (some call it a season) it is in church this month. It's called Advent. Advent that's a funny word hey? Has anyone heard that word before? Today is the first Sunday in Advent.

Yep we can buy Advent calendars. Has anyone here got an Advent calendar? Has yours got chocolates in it? Did you have one this morning. (Before breakfast or after breakfast?) What was the picture you opened today?

What kind of pictures are on Advent calendars? Yep there are lots of pictures to remind us of Christmas. Actually you can get Advent calendars at the Warehouse now that have the Simpsons on them or other movie characters – but they aren't the real Advent calendars!

I've got a real Advent calendar here. See it's got lots of pictures that remind us of the Christmas story (you may like to discuss how some of the pictures remind us of the Christmas story).

And see it's got numbers on it. Why do you think that is? Yes that's right, the numbers remind us how many days there are until Christmas.

Do you ever count how many days you have to go until an exciting day – like: "Only 28 days until we go to Australia for our holiday" or my Blake starts asking two months before his birthday: "How many days till my birthday now mum? " When we can't wait for something to happen we like to count the days. It's called counting down to something.

So who knows how many days it is until Christmas?

We call the time from now until Christmas Advent! Ad means "to" and "vent" means "come". It's a time when we prepare for someone very important to come. Who knows who that important person is?

Yes Jesus. The church is counting down to the day when we remember Jesus birth. And like any important event we have lots of preparations during the next four weeks. At our church we prepare for Jesus birth by sharing the story of Jesus birth in lots of ways.

You guys are preparing now for your Christmas pageant. Some of you are preparing dances, others practising your instruments.

The choir is preparing for a special Christmas Carols service. Pauline and Amy are preparing to share the story of Jesus birth with lots of kids from our community at the Christmas Kids Club next week.



And at home we will also be doing lots of preparations. We can get very busy as we prepare for our holidays, the food for our Christmas dinner, the presents, our Christmas parties. But we need to remember not to get so busy that we forget the main reason for all the preparations. Christmas is a time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus and we thank God for the hope, peace, joy and love Jesus brings to our lives. Today we lit our first Advent candle, the candle of hope and remembered how Jesus brings hope to our lives and wants us to bring hope to others. Over the next weeks we will also light the candles of peace, joy and love.

And on Christmas day, we light the fifth and last candle. The white candle or Christ candle to remind us of the birth of Jesus and to give thanks to God for giving us his most precious gift ever.

Let us pray:

Loving father we thank you that there are so many things that remind us of your son Jesus at this time of year. Christmas cards we send with our love to others. Christmas trees with a star on it, Christmas lights and decorations, presents, we give and get. We want to thank you for all of these things, but most of all for Jesus who was the best present ever. Help us all to understand how much you love every one of us, from the tiny baby to the oldest person in the world. We thank you father. Amen.

3. CHRISTMAS AND ADVENT CRAFTS AND ACTIVITIES

Websites

- www.childrensministry.com – for heaps of ideas on Christmas activities and family events
- Christmas Activities for Kids: Countdown to Christmas
<https://childrensministry.com/countdown-to-christmas/>
- www.cecm.vistas.uca.org – they have lots of good ideas for worship, activities, crafts.
- <http://sa.uca.org.au/intergen/family-resources/> – for great children’s ministry ideas for Christmas
- **More Kids Friendly Christmas Resources:**
 - A Family Advent Resource – Advent@Highgate
 - Mary and Joseph Journey to Bethlehem
 - Christmas Crafts
 - Christmas Games and Quizzes
 - Sharing the Christmas Story - Sample Sunday School Lesson Plans
 - For the four Sundays before Advent

Contact

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