A GENTLE GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

ADVENT AT HOME

MAKING ROOM FOR WONDER

Four simple weeks of stories, play, and prayer.



A PLAYFUL, GENTLE ADVENT RESOURCE

HOPE • PEACE • JOY • LOVE

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Children, Youth and Family Mission
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START HERE

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DEAR GROWN-UP,

You do not have to be a Bible expert to explore faith with a child. You get to wonder alongside them.

YOU HAVE PERMISSION TO MAKE THIS YOUR OWN.

Your family may be joyful, grieving, changing, noisy, quiet—or all of these. You belong here. Pick one small moment each week. Ten minutes is enough. Two minutes is enough. Missing a week is okay.

THE SIMPLE RHYTHM

01 GATHER
Come as you are. A meal, couch, floor or car ride works.

02 TELL & WONDER
Read the story. Ask one question. Nobody has to answer.

03 PLAY OR PAUSE
Choose a response, watch, or skip it entirely.

04 PRAY
Use the short prayer, keep silence, or speak your own words.

Wonder alongside children. You do not need every answer.

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A LIGHT AT A TIME

Many Anglican churches use an Advent wreath to mark the four Sundays before Christmas

THE FOUR LIGHTS



On the first Sunday of Advent, light one candle. Each Sunday, add another light until all four are shining. Paper stars or battery-operated lights work just as well.

Purple or blue candles are both familiar in Anglican Advent traditions. Some families use a pink candle for the third Sunday, a day of joy. All one colour is fine too.

MAKE IT AT HOME

Try battery-operated candles, four paper stars, four pebbles, or simply the light of an ordinary room. No purchases needed.

PRAY TOGETHER

Grown-up: O Morning Star, bright Sun of righteousness: come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.
All: Lord Jesus, come soon.
Grown-up: O Emmanuel, hope of the nations: come and save us.
All: Lord Jesus, come soon.

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WEEK 1 / HOPE

A LITTLE LIGHT MATTERS



Hope is not pretending everything is fine.

BIBLE STORY • ISAIAH 9:2, 6

TELL IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR READ THIS TOGETHER

Long before Jesus was born, the people of God knew what it was like to feel afraid, tired, and unsure of what might happen next. They were waiting for things to change. Through the prophet Isaiah, they heard a promise: light was coming. A child would be born. God had not forgotten them.

The promise did not make every hard thing disappear that day. The people still had questions. They still had to wait. But they had a reason to keep looking for what God might do next.

Advent begins here: not with everything fixed, but with a tiny light that says the story is not over.

WONDER TOGETHER

- I wonder what people felt when they heard this promise.
- What might a little light help us notice?
- Where do you see something good beginning—even very small?

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WEEK 1 / TRY SOMETHING

A PLAYFUL WAY IN

You can do less. You can do it differently. You can just be together.

CHOOSE TO PLAY

MAKE A PATHWAY OF TINY LIGHTS



Cut or tear out four small paper stars, or draw them.

Put them in a path across the table. At the end, place an LED candle or draw a bright window. As you add each star, name or imagine one small good thing in the world. Silence counts too.

MAKE IT YOURS

Young children can point or colour; older children can add words. Or just look out a window together.

IF YOU HAVE A MOMENT BETWEEN SUNDAYS

Notice one friendly light in a window or on a walk. Draw a star and leave it where someone might smile. Ask, "What is something small we hope for?"

WITH TEENS

When is hope different from optimism? Find a song, image, or headline that feels like a small sign of hope. No need to defend your choice.

A PRAYER TO BORROW

God of small beginnings, be with us when we are uncertain. Help us notice tiny lights, and be gentle with people who are waiting. Amen.

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WEEK 2 / PEACE

QUESTIONS BELONG HERE



Peace can make room for all our feelings.

BIBLE STORY • LUKE 1:26–38

TELL IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR READ THIS TOGETHER

Mary was living an ordinary life when an angel came with surprising news: she would have a baby called Jesus. Mary was startled, and she asked a question.

The angel listened and answered. Mary had room to wonder before she responded.

We do not know all the feelings Mary carried, perhaps excitement, worry, or many feelings at once.

In Advent, peace need not mean everyone is quiet or happy. Sometimes peace begins when questions are welcomed and someone really listens.

WONDER TOGETHER

- What part of Mary's story would you ask about?
- I wonder who helped Mary feel heard.
- What does a welcoming place feel or look like to you?

Choose one question, or none. Wondering is enough; answers are optional.

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WEEK 2 / TRY SOMETHING

A PLAYFUL WAY IN

You can do less. You can do it differently. You can just be together.

CHOOSE TO PLAY



BUILD A SPACE FOR QUESTIONS

Create a little wonder space with whatever is nearby: perhaps a blanket corner, cushions, blocks, or a drawing. Imagine that any question is welcome. An adult could begin: "One thing I wonder about this story is…"

MAKE IT YOURS

Children may build, draw, invent a silly question, watch, or pass. You can simply choose a favourite place to sit.

IF YOU HAVE A MOMENT BETWEEN SUNDAYS

- Listen for a quiet, loud, and surprising sound.
- Offer someone two choices and honour their answer.
- Make room for quiet or movement.

WITH TEENS

Mary asks "How?" before she responds. What is one question about God or the world you would like adults to take seriously? You may keep it private.

A PRAYER TO BORROW

God of timeless grace, fill us with joyful expectation. Help us listen to one another and make room for your peace. Amen.

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WEEK 3 / JOY

A WELCOME WORTH CELEBRATING

Joy is a guest, not a rule.



BIBLE STORY • LUKE 1:39–56

TELL IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR READ THIS TOGETHER

After the angel's visit, Mary went to see her relative Elizabeth. Mary had a great deal to think about, and perhaps she was glad to talk. Elizabeth greeted Mary warmly, noticed something wonderful in her story, and made space for her. Together they celebrated what God was doing.

Mary sang of God lifting up people the world often overlooks and filling hungry people with good things.

Joy can be about welcome, being noticed, and imagining a world where people are cared for. We can celebrate without pretending every day is easy.

WONDER TOGETHER

- What do you notice about Elizabeth's welcome?
- I wonder how Mary felt when someone listened to her.
- Can a small joy and a hard feeling happen on the same day?

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A PLAYFUL WAY IN

You can do less. You can do it differently. You can just be together.

CHOOSE TO PLAY

GO ON A TINY JOY SAFARI

Look for three little things that bring delight: a funny sound, a warm sock, a favourite colour, a pet, or a delicious smell. Draw a playful "joy map," point to your finds, or tell a silly story about them.



MAKE IT YOURS Try a quiet version by pointing instead of talking, or a lively ten-second dance. Everyone chooses their own way.

IF YOU HAVE A MOMENT BETWEEN SUNDAYS

- Notice an unexpectedly beautiful colour.
- Share a joke, song, or quiet smile if you want to.
- Thank someone for making space for you.

WITH TEENS

Mary's song imagines a world turned toward justice and care. What good news would you like people who are overlooked to hear this season? ✦

A PRAYER TO BORROW

God of Elizabeth and Mary, fill our hearts with joy and help us welcome the Christ in our midst. Amen.

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WEEK 4 / LOVE

LOVE COMES CLOSE



The Christmas story begins in an ordinary place.

BIBLE STORY • LUKE 2:1–20

TELL IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR READ THIS TOGETHER

Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem. While they were there, Jesus was born. Mary wrapped him snugly and laid him in a manger.

Nearby, shepherds cared for their sheep through the night. Angels brought joyful news of Jesus' birth. The shepherds went to see him.

Jesus did not arrive in a palace. The story takes us to a baby, his caregivers, some shepherds, and an ordinary place.

Christians celebrate that God came near in Jesus. Love can be wonderfully ordinary: making space, showing up, listening, and caring.

WONDER TOGETHER

- Which person in this story would you like to meet?
- I wonder what the shepherds told their friends.
- What might it look like to make someone feel welcome?

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WEEK 4 / TRY SOMETHING

A PLAYFUL WAY IN

MAKE ROOM FOR THE STORY

Build or draw a little place for baby Jesus. Add Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and any animals you imagine nearby. Use toys, folded paper, a nativity set, or simple shapes. Act it out if you wish.



MAKE IT YOURS

Little ones may move a figure or tuck in a cloth. Older children can add a speech bubble: "I wonder what you need?"

IF YOU HAVE A MOMENT BETWEEN SUNDAYS

- Ask someone, "Would company or space feel better?"
- Draw a welcome sign for your family, however it is formed.
- Ask someone what would help, then do one small thing for them.

WITH TEENS

Who gets missed in the usual Christmas picture? What might it mean to welcome someone without trying to fix them?

A PRAYER TO BORROW

God who came close in Jesus, thank you for love that makes room. Help us notice people left out and welcome care for ourselves too. Amen.

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CHRISTMAS DAY

THE LIGHT IS HERE



A little celebration that works at breakfast, bedtime, or any time.

TWO-MINUTE CHRISTMAS PRAYER PRACTICE

LOOK Look at a light, a window, or one another.

SAY At Christmas, Christians remember: God came close in Jesus.

WONDER What is one part of the story you want to remember? Passing is okay.

PRAY God of all ages, in the birth of Christ you have shown your love and light. Be born in us with that same love. Amen.

INVITATION

The printable Christmas Story Hunt follows in the appendix. You can also stay seated and point to the places where the cards would go.

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APPENDIX / CHRISTMAS STORY HUNT

PRINT • CUT • HIDE • PLAY



IN THREE EASY STEPS

1. Cut out the eight cards on the following pages.
2. Place each numbered card in its suggested spot.
3. Begin at card 1. Read, follow the clue, and enjoy the story together.

WHERE TO PLACE THE CARDS

1 In your hand or on a table
2 Near a light
3 By a door
4 Near shoes
5 Beside a blanket or cushion
6 Near a towel or cloth
7 By a window
8 On a table

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CUT-OUT CARDS 1–4

1 THE PROMISE

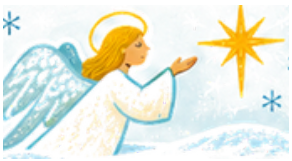
Long before Jesus was born, people hoped for God to bring light into their world.



Find something that shines or glows.

2 A SURPRISING HELLO

An angel visited Mary with extraordinary news: she would have a baby named Jesus.



Find a place where people come and go.

3 ROOM FOR QUESTIONS

Mary was surprised. She asked questions and had space to wonder.



Find something you put on for a journey.

4 ON THE WAY

Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem, where Jesus would be born.



Find something soft and cosy.

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CUT-OUT CARDS 5–8

5 A PLACE FOR A BABY

Jesus was born. Mary wrapped him snugly and laid him in a feeding trough.



Find something made of cloth.

6 SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELDS

Nearby, shepherds were caring for sheep through the night.



Find a place to look outside.

7

Angels told the shepherds Jesus was born. They hurried to see him.



Find a place where you might share a meal.

8

The shepherds visited Jesus, then shared the news. Love had come close in an ordinary place.



What part of the story will you remember?

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