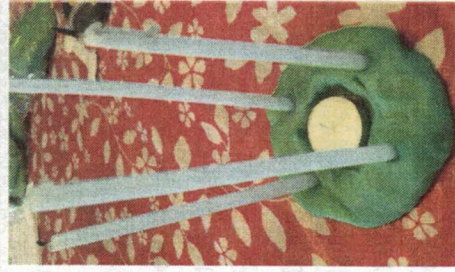
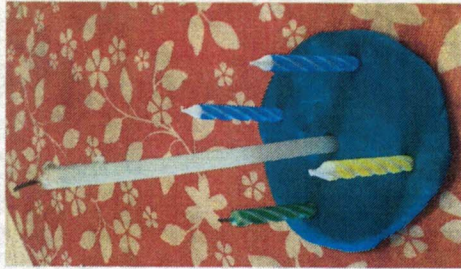


ADVENT CANDLES and OTHER FUN STUFF

Hello from your friends at Harrow United Church!



The IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES section of this booklet as well as some of the material for lighting the Advent candles are from Faithful Families for Advent and Christmas: 100 Ways to Make the Season Sacred (pp. 26-27). © 2020 by Traci M. Smith. Chalice Press, St. Louis Missouri. The author has given permission for them to be used.

Advent 1—the Candle of Hope

Through Advent, the days grow shorter, the nights grow longer, and our world grows darker and colder. Yet, even in the darkness, there is a light that shines. Each week of Advent, we will light candles to brighten the darkness, to bring a little warmth, and to remind ourselves that nothing is so dark or cold it is beyond God's saving power.

Today, in this first week of Advent, we light the candle of hope, remembering that God offers us the gift of hope. There is always room for more hope in our world.

[light a candle now]

Read (optional): Psalm 25:4-5

Make your ways known to me, LORD;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth—teach it to me—
because you are the God who saves me.
I put my hope in you all day long.

Discuss: What does it mean to have hope? What do you think about when you hear the word hope? How can we share hope with others?

Prayer

God, we thank you for giving us hope. Help us to have hope and to share hope as we wait for Jesus to be born. Amen.

Sing: VU # 7 verse 1 *Hope is a Star*

Hope is a star that shines in the night,
leading us on till the morning is bright.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.

Advent 2—the Candle of Peace

Through Advent, the days grow shorter, the nights grow longer, and our world grows darker and colder. Week by week, we light candles in our Advent wreath to brighten the darkness, to bring a little warmth, and to remind ourselves that nothing is so dark or cold it is beyond God's saving power.

The first week of Advent, we lit the candle of hope.
[light the first candle]

In this second week of Advent, we light the candle of peace, remembering God's gift of peace. There is always room for more peace in our world.

[light the second candle]

Read (optional): John 14:25-27

"I have spoken these things to you while I am with you. The Companion, the Holy Spirit, whom God will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you. "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don't be troubled or afraid."

Discuss: What does it mean to have peace in your heart? How can we share peace in our family and in the world?

Prayer:

God, please help us to understand peace and to share it with others. We wait for Jesus to be born with hope and peace. Amen.

Sing: VU # 7 verse 2 *Peace is a Ribbon*

Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
Giving a promise of safety and worth.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.

Advent 3: The Candle of Joy

Through Advent, the days grow shorter, the nights grow longer, and our world grows darker and colder. Week by week, we light candles in our Advent wreath to brighten the darkness, to bring a little warmth, and to remind ourselves that nothing is so dark or cold it is beyond God's saving power.

The first week of Advent, we lit the candle of hope.

[light the first candle]

The second Sunday of Advent, we lit the candle of peace.

[light the second candle]

In this third week of Advent, we light the candle of joy, remembering that God's gift of joy. There is always room for more joy in our world.

[light the third candle]

Read (optional): Philippians 4:4–6

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Discuss: What does it mean to rejoice? How is joy the same or different from happiness? How can we share joy with others?

Pray: God, we thank you for the gift of joy. Help us to share it with one another. We wait for Jesus with hope, peace, and joy. Amen.

Sing: VU # 7 verse 3 *Joy is a Song*

Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,
telling the world that the Saviour is born

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.

Advent 4: The Candle of Love

Through Advent, the days grow shorter, the nights grow longer, and our world grows darker and colder. Week by week, we light candles in our Advent wreath to brighten the darkness, to bring a little warmth, and to remind ourselves that nothing is so dark or cold it is beyond God's saving power.

The first week of Advent, we lit the candle of hope.

[light the first candle]

The second week of Advent, we lit the candle of peace.

[light the second candle]

The third week of Advent, we lit the candle of joy.

[light the third candle]

In this fourth week of Advent, we light the candle of love, remembering God's gift of love. There is always room for more love in our world.

[light the second candle]

Read (optional): 1 John 4:7–12

Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love. This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. This is love: it is not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins.

Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God remains in us and his love is made perfect in us.

Discuss: When have you felt or seen God's love? How can we show God's love to the world?

Pray: God, thank you for showing us what true love is. Help us to love you and to love one another. We wait for Jesus with hope, peace, joy, and love. Amen.

Sing: VU # 7 verse 4 *Love is a Flame*

Love is a flame that burns in our heart,
Jesus has come and will never depart.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.



Christmas Eve or Christmas Day: The Christ Candle

Light: Today we light the candles for hope, peace, joy, and love, and we light the center candle for the birth of Jesus.

Read (optional): Luke 2:1-16

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone

around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

Discuss: The day we have been waiting for is here! How does it feel to celebrate the birth of Jesus today? What does the birth of Jesus mean to you?

Pray: God, today we are thankful for the birth of your son, Jesus, and for the lessons he teaches us about how to love one another. Help us throughout the year to share hope, peace, joy, and love wherever we go. Amen.

Sing: *Joy to the World or Silent Night*

IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES

Paper Chain Advent Calendar

An Advent calendar marks the days until Christmas, and a paper chain calendar is one of the simplest styles. Simply take 24 (or 25) strips of paper and link them together, removing one each day until Christmas. The chain is a visual reminder of how many days are left until Christmas. There are endless variations on a paper chain Advent calendar.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Number the strips as you put them together.
- Color Christmas symbols and scenes on the strips.
- Write down ideas for fun things you will do together and then do them as you remove them from the chain.

Make an Advent chain in reverse: Instead of removing a link from the chain each day, start with one link and add a link every day. Each day you add to the chain, write down something you are grateful for on the link, or write down a memory from the day. At the end of Advent, you'll have a chain full of gratitude or memories!

Christmas Card Prayers

The idea is very simple: As you receive Christmas cards, put them in a basket in the middle of the dinner table or in another prominent family location. When you are ready to have Christmas card prayer time, take the cards out one by one and say a simple prayer or blessing for the family that sent it. The blessing can be plain ("God bless the Martinez family") or tailored ("God bless the Chen family, as Anna goes to college and Peter starts his new job"). Take added time to tell stories about the families who sent them, read the letters that have been included, and pray God's blessing upon the entire family. At the end of the Christmas season, before recycling the cards, take one last opportunity to flip through them, naming the recipients and giving thanks to God for their lives. Say a prayer at the end of your time together: God, thank you so much for the families who have sent us these cards. Please bless each one throughout the year. May they feel the presence of your Spirit, even now as we pray. Amen.