

An Advent Intergenerational Event

The beginning of Advent is a wonderful time to gather the whole church family together to learn and celebrate together the beginning of a brand new church year and begin to anticipate and prepare for the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

Intentional intergenerational events are among the best activities a church can have to help all of our members grow in faith and in faithful relationships across all ages. When we share our rich stories of faith with each other we help our younger members learn from those they look up to and provide opportunities for our older members to experience anew the wonder and awe of our children. Together we build meaningful cross-generational relationships that lead to life-long faith formation.

This intergenerational Event has been designed to not only provide an opportunity for faith sharing and learning, but also to provide resources for all of our families to continue to learn and worship together at home through the ritual of lighting an advent candle each day of advent and doing age-appropriate family devotions together. Together the congregation will share in a meal, learn about the history and practice of advent, get to know each other a little more, make an family advent wreath to take home, be supplied with an advent devotional booklet, and practice the ritual of lighting the wreath, reading and praying as a family at the event so they're ready to carry it on day-by-day as a family when they get home.

This event is designed to happen on the first Sunday of Advent following worship or in the evening, or on a weeknight during the week before Advent. Here's what your Advent Event could look like:

Would You Rather (10 minutes) This is a fun getting-to-know-you game that you could play either before or after the shared meal. You play *Would You Rather* by dividing the *Would You Rather* questions slips of paper between four baskets. Place one basket on each of four little tables or chairs set up in a circle to create question stations. Divide the participants between each of the stations and invite one member of each group to pick out a slip from their basket and read it to the group surrounding the basket beginning with the words, "Would you rather", followed by the two options on their slip of paper. For instance they might read, "Would you rather a. hot chocolate or b. apple cider". Each person responds with their own personal preference. Once they've shared their answer with their group those who chose option 'a' move to the next station in a clockwise direction, while all of the 'b's' move in a counter clockwise direction. Just drop the slip of paper in the basket before you move on for someone else to pick out later in the game.

Every station is asking and answering questions all the time with people moving quickly to their next stations, either clockwise or counterclockwise, depending on their individual answers. There are no winners, just opportunities to mix the group up and get to know each other a little more. Stop the game while it is still fun.

The *Would You Rather* slips of paper are attached as a separate file with this resource. Just cut them apart and you're ready to go.

Share with a Meal (45 minutes) A potluck meal makes it easy for everyone. You may wish to ask families to bring a seasonal family favorite. Is there a food they always eat when they decorate the tree? wrap presents? have extended family members over? You may wish to put on some hot apple cider or hot chocolate for everyone to enjoy the scents of the season. Whatever works for you church with the emphasis on easy and enjoyable.

Invite families to sit together at this meal, but make sure a broad cross-section of ages are represented at each dining table. Decorate the tables festively and place some discussion cards on each table with fun Christmas questions such as: What is your favorite Christmas carol? What was the best Christmas gift you ever received and why? What is your favorite Christmas cookie and who makes it? Who's coming for Christmas this year? What do like to eat at Christmas? Encourage tables to get to know each other a little more through these questions and chat about Christmas' past and the joy each has brought.

Intro to Advent (10 - 20 minutes depending on the age of the group) While everyone is still at their tables take some time to introduce the theme of Advent to the group. Rather than delivering a lecture on Advent you might want to pick some of the more interesting points about Advent and print one point per piece of construction paper, cut each piece of construction paper into a 6 - 8 piece jigsaw puzzle, and place each jigsaw puzzle into an individual envelope. Distribute the envelopes of puzzles to the table groups and have them assemble their puzzles to discover exciting things about Advent for themselves. Have each group share what they have learned with the whole group.

Here are some interesting things to know about Advent:

- Advent is the beginning of the church year
- Advent means 'to come'
- Advent begins four Sundays prior to Christmas
- during Advent we ready ourselves for the birth of Christ, the coming of Christ into our lives, and for the return of Christ
- Advent is season of expectation, anticipation, preparation
- Advent was originally a season of penitence and has become a season of joy and celebration in modern times
- the colour of Advent is either purple or blue, depending on the congregation's choice
- The bible is filled with references to Christ as the light of the world. We light Advent candles to remind us that Christ is coming as light and as the number of lit candles increases as we get closer to Christmas we see that the light is growing brighter week by week
- The evergreens of the advent wreath represent life and growth
- The circle of the Advent wreath have no beginning and no end, as Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega; the beginning and the end

- The four coloured candles of the Advent wreath represent the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy (sometimes represented by the colour pink) and Love.

Make An Advent Wreath (30 minutes) Each household should make an Advent wreath together to take home with them. The instructions for a beautiful and easy, fresh Advent wreath are included in this file. If there are bigger families who might want to make more than one wreath, they might want to make an additional wreath for a shut-in.

Worship Together (15 minutes) As families begin to complete their wreaths gather the whole group together and distribute the Advent devotional booklets included in this file. Explain that Advent is a wonderful time to begin a new family tradition together and that lighting the advent candles and reading scripture/stories together is a wonderful ritual to bring into their homes. As a whole group complete the first day of Advent devotions as it is written in the devotion booklet. You may wish to include a couple of Advent hymns to you worship.

Thank the families for attending and remind them to repeat the devotion that evening and continue through their devotional booklets at a consistent time each day.

