

For Us, A Child Is Born!



Thank you to Gareth Harper and unsplash.com

Written by Tori Smit
Regional Minister for Faith Formation
Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda

www.cnob.org

Advent Devotions for All Ages

Sunday, Nov. 28 - Saturday, Dec. 25, 2021

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Journal



For Us, A Child Is Born

Advent is the first season of the Christian year and begins four Sundays before Christmas Day. Sunday, November 28, 2021 is the first day of Advent for us this year, and on that day we are invited to set off on a journey of anticipation and preparation.

The word “advent” goes all the way back to the people who spoke Latin in ancient Rome. Back then the word was ‘advenire’, and it meant ‘coming toward’. Over time the word became better known as ‘advent’ and has come to mean that ‘something’ is coming. In the church, when we use the word ‘Advent’, we use a capital “A” because we don’t mean just anything is coming; we mean something really important is coming - **Christ is coming!** During Advent we prepare for Jesus’ coming both as a baby in Bethlehem and also as our Saviour who will come again and usher in the kingdom of God.

There are many ways to prepare for Jesus’ coming into our lives. One important way is to set aside time to be quiet, offer prayers, hear the stories of God’s plan for Jesus’ birth, and think about what this all means for us, the church and our world. In this little booklet you will find a weekly Advent candle lighting litany, daily bible readings, accompanying stories from excellent children’s bible story books, questions to ponder with journaling pages to record your thoughts and doodles, and quiet moments of prayer for this special season. Try and set aside a quiet time each day to do the devotions you find here; early in the morning, during the evening meal, or before bed is a wonderful time to gather together and follow the readings and activities found in this booklet.

If you would like to add additional daily activities to these devotions visit www.cnob.org and search for the ‘interactive Advent Calendar’ for 2021. Every day you are invited to open a window on this calendar and discover videoed bible stories, crafts, games, music and many other daily activities for all ages to enjoy.

We hope that Advent will be for you a time of joy as you prepare for Christ to come into your home this season.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Friday, Dec. 24 - Saturday, Dec. 25

Light the Advent Candles and the Christ Candle

All - This is the candle of Hope. (light candle)
This is the candle of Peace. (light candle)
This is the candle of Joy. (light candle)
This is the candle of Love. (light candle)
This is the Christ candle (light centre candle)
Thank you God for the birth of Jesus, your Son,
who brings hope, peace, joy and love to our world.

Daily Scripture and Stories

Christmas Eve - Luke 2:1-14

Spark Story Bible p. 212, “Jesus Is Born”

Growing in God’s Love p. 190, “A Baby Is Born”

Read Wonder Listen p. 146, “Jesus Is Born”

Saturday - Isaiah 9:2-7

Questions to Ponder

1. Consider what Mary might be pondering in her heart.
2. What are you pondering in your heart today?
3. How will you, like the shepherds, tell those you meet about this special day?

Prayer

Loving God, we cannot find words to say how we feel today. Our hearts are overflowing with joy. In our silence we are so very thankful for the birth of your Son, Jesus. This is the greatest gift of all. Amen.

Wonder-Filled Children's Story Bibles for Advent

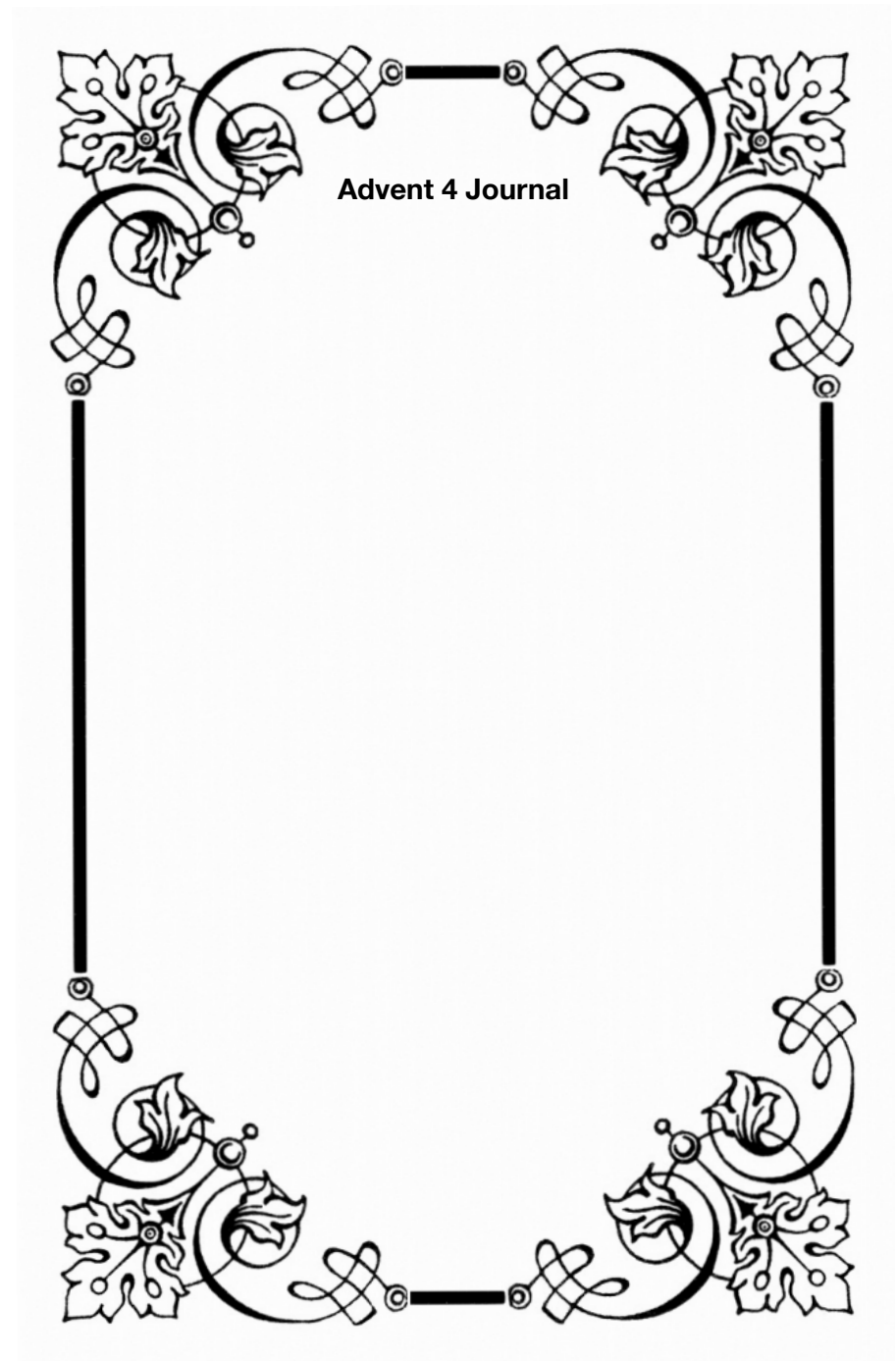
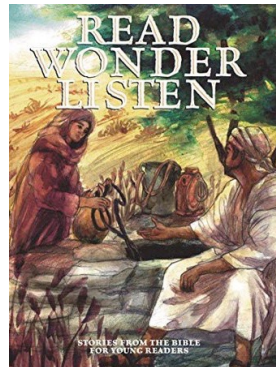
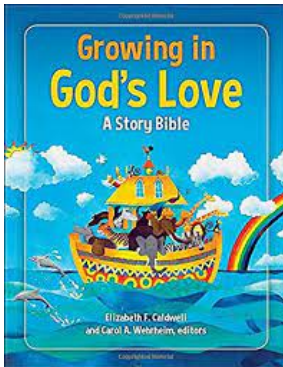
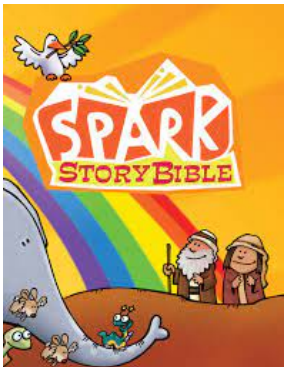
For younger children hearing bible stories read aloud directly from scripture can be challenging. Hearing these same stories read aloud from an excellent children's bible storybook can help the words come alive and become memorable for younger children.

For this reason, this devotional booklet includes options for families with younger children to read the scripture stories from either of three excellent children's bible story bibles. They are **Spark Story Bible** from Sparkhouse, **Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible** edited by Elizabeth Caldwell and Carol Wehrheim, and **Read Wonder Listen: Stories From the Bible for Young Readers** by Laura Alary. The first is great for families with pre-readers and early readers, while the third will appeal to older children. *Growing in God's Love* is for readers in between these two groups.

Families with children may choose to only use a bible story book for their devotions each week, or blend the bible story book readings in alongside the daily scripture readings. Parents will know best what will work for them.

Your church may already have a copy of one or more of these story bibles in your church library, and/or extra copies to loan out from the Sunday School. Just ask your church if this is possible. Otherwise they can be purchased through Sparkhouse, Amazon and Wood Lake Books.

Here's what they each look like:



A Simple Wreath to Make for Advent

Advent 4

Sunday, Dec. 19 - Thursday, Dec. 23

Light the Four Advent Candles

First Reader - This is the candle of Hope. (light candle)

Second Reader - This is the candle of Peace. (light candle)

Third Reader - This is the candle of Joy. (light candle)

Fourth Reader - This is the candle of Love. (light candle)

Response - Thank you God for your love for Mary, Joseph and all who cared for them. Thank you God for your love for us all.

Daily Scripture and Stories

Sunday - Luke 1:39-45

Spark Story Bible p. 202, "Mary Visits Elizabeth"

Monday - Luke 1:46-56

Read Wonder Listen p. 144, "Mary is Surprised"

Tuesday - Psalm 130

Wednesday - Luke 1:57-66

Thursday - Micah 5:2-5a

Spark Story Bible p. 194, "A Ruler From Bethlehem"

Questions to Ponder

1. What did you hear today that reveals God's love to you?
2. Consider a time when you saw someone you loved very much cared for you when you really needed it. How did they show they cared? How did you feel to receive such care? How did you say thank you?
3. Consider how waiting for something can prepare you for what is yet to come.
4. Consider how you might share God's love with someone this week.

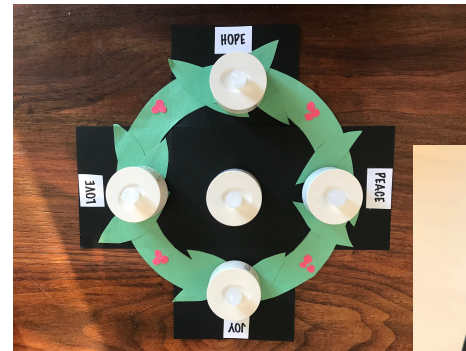
Prayer

We thank you God for those who have shown us how to trust you. We thank you for your deep love and care for Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, and Zechariah; for your promises that all would be well and that through their faithfulness your Son would come into our world and live among us. Amen.

Many of our churches begin their worship services during Advent by lighting brightly coloured candles set within a fragrant evergreen wreath. As the candles are lit each week the room becomes just a little bit brighter than it was before. It is wonderful ritual that reminds us that Jesus comes to us as the light of the world and that we are all active participants in this very special season of the church year.

Our Advent wreath dates back to the 16th century in Northern Europe. The circular wreath symbolizes that life is continuous from one generation to the next, while the blue or purple candles mirror the liturgical colours of Advent and represent Hope, Peace and Love. The third candle to be lit is sometimes pink, standing out as the candle of Joy. This candle marks a shift in the focus of our scripture readings moving us from repentance towards celebration. The fifth, white candle waits in the middle to be lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to welcome Jesus' birth.

It is wonderful to bring the church ritual of an Advent wreath in our homes. If you'd like to make a simple Advent wreath for your home the instructions and templates to make this little Advent Wreath in a Box can be found at <https://bit.ly/2ZIPxXW>. With battery powered votive candles it is perfect for younger children to actively participate in the candle lighting.



Advent 1

Sunday, Nov. 28 - Saturday, Dec. 4

Light the First Advent Candle

Reader - This is the candle of Hope. (light candle)

Response - We look forward to Jesus' coming with hope.

Daily Scriptures and Stories

Sunday - Jeremiah 1:4-10

Spark Story Bible p. 176, "Jeremiah"

Growing in God's Love p. 148, "Speak Up, Jeremiah"

Monday - Jeremiah 32:6-15

Spark Story Bible p. 178, "A Good Ruler"

Read Wonder Listen p. 126, Josiah, Jeremiah, and the Last Days of Judah"

Tuesday - Jeremiah 33:14-16

Spark Story Bible p. 172, "God's Peaceful World"

Wednesday - Psalm 25:1-10

Thursday - 1 Thessalonians 3:9-10

Friday - 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

Growing in God's Love p. 314, "A Loving Heart Helps Others"

Saturday - Luke 21:25-36

Read Wonder Listen p. 239, "John Has A Dream"

Questions to Ponder

1. What did you hear today that gives you hope?
2. Consider how hope that is confident in the promises of God casts out fear.
3. Consider how you might live differently when you trust in God's promises.
4. Consider how you might share this hope with someone you know this week.

Prayer

Faithful God, how good it is to remember that you keep your promises. Let this Advent be a time for us to remember that you love us and tell us over and over again to live in your hope.

When we see a new branch growing out of an old stump, we know that the hope you offer us is true. Help us to live into your hope everyday as we share this hope with others. Amen.

Advent 3 Journal



Advent 3

Sunday, Dec. 12 - Saturday, Dec. 18

Light the First, Second & Third Advent Candles

First Reader - This is the candle of Hope. (light candle)

Second Reader - This is the candle of Peace. (light candle)

Third Reader - This is the candle of Joy. (light candle)

Response - We lift our voices in praise and joy for what is about to happen.

Daily Scripture and Stories

Sunday - Zephaniah 3:14-20

Read Wonder Listen p. 131, "Ezekiel's Vision"

Monday - Isaiah 12:2-6

Tuesday - Philippians 4:4-7

Wednesday - Luke 3:7-17

Spark Story Bible p. 234, "John the Baptist"

Read Wonder Listen p. 155, "John Baptizes Jesus"

Thursday - John 1:1-9, 14-15

Spark Story Bible p. 240, "Jesus the Word"

Friday - Luke 1:26-38

Growing in God's Love p. 186, "How Can This Happen?"

Saturday - Matthew 1:18-25

Spark Story Bible p. 196, "Angels Visit"

Questions to Ponder

1. What did you hear today that brings you great joy?
2. Consider what brings God great joy.
3. How do show others that you are filled with joy? What do you do and say?
4. Think of specific ways you can share your Advent joy with others this week.

Prayer

God of all joy, we are filled with praise for you today. We celebrate the growing light of the Advent candles and the knowledge that Jesus is coming to live among us. Like John, we want to tell others you that Jesus' arrival changes everything. With lights, and song, and dancing we say thank you. Amen.



Advent 2

Sunday, Dec. 5 - Saturday, Dec. 11

Light the First and Second Advent Candles

First Reader - This is the candle of Hope. (light candle)

Second Reader - This is the candle of Peace. (light candle)

Response - Thank you God for messages and messengers of hope.

Daily Scripture and Stories

Sunday - Malachi 3:1-4

Monday - Isaiah 40:3-5

Spark Story Bible p. 164, "God Will Bring Peace"

Tuesday - Luke 1:5-20, 57-66

Growing in God's Love p.188, "A Prophet is Born"

Wednesday - Luke 1:67-79

Spark Story Bible p. 208, "Zechariah"

Thursday - Luke 3:1-6

Growing in God's Love p. 200, "Shhh, Listen"

Friday - Isaiah 43:18-19

Saturday - Philippians 1:3-11

Spark Story Bible p. 554, "Paul and the Philippians"

Questions to Ponder

1. What promises did you hear in today's reading?
2. Consider what the peace that God promises looks like for our world.
3. Consider how God's special messenger prepared the world for change.
4. Consider how you can also to be a messenger of God's hope and peace in the world.

Prayer

Faithful God, with you the impossible is possible. With you real peace is possible. With you living in peace, sharing peace with others, and the foretelling of your dreams of peace are made real. Your kingdom come, O Lord, your kingdom come. Amen.

