



CELEBRATING ADVENT

FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Preparing for Christmas



ADVENT 1

SWORDS INTO PLOWSHEARS

Gather: Begin by lighting the first candle of your Advent Wreath as someone says these words:

This is the candle of hope. We are getting ready to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, who is the hope for the future.

Read:

Isaiah 2:1-5

Explore:

Start by molding your foil into a sword. In Bible times a sword was very valuable and useful. While you are molding, discuss what sorts of metal things we have that are valuable and useful, a car, for example, or keys.

Look at the swords that people have made. They're great, but not much use if you are hungry. That's where the ploughshare is needed. What is a ploughshare? If you're not sure, Google it to find out or look at some of the information below.


Back in Isaiah's day professional armies were a rare beast. Instead, when the king of this town wanted to fight the king of that town, he just rounded up all local blokes, so pretty much everyone of working age was suddenly a soldier.

Problem – pretty much everyone was a farmer as well. You can't just walk off and leave crops unplanted or people will starve come the winter. **Solution** – schedule your wars to fit in with the farming year. Seriously! That's what they did. 2 Sam 11 talks about spring being the time that kings go off to war. It's after the crops are planted and before the harvest, so your army is free to fight.

If you're a farmer during planting and harvest time and a soldier during the growing time you'll need both a sword and a plough share (that's the metal bit on the bottom that cuts through the soil). So back to the question: why would you ruin a perfectly good sword to make one? Answer: because you're never going to need to use the sword again.

We don't use ploughs much ourselves, but we all use other metal things to feed ourselves – knives and forks.





Re-mold your foil from a sword into a knife, a fork or a spoon – or all three! While you are molding, talk about what it might mean today to ‘beat our swords into ploughshares’. We are not going to hammer our cars into knives and forks, but how can we use what we have to make a difference? What changes could we make in our patch of land?

Watch the Swords into Ploughshares YouTube Clip. Link at <http://stpaulsstaffordathome.weebly.com/advent-2016.html>.

Hang your foil creation on your tree to remind you that we have hope in Jesus for a better future.

(adapted from a reflection found here:
<https://reflectionary.org/2016/11/14/isaiah-21-5/>)

Pray

Join hands around the Advent wreath and someone says:

The Advent wreath is a circle that has no beginning and no end. It reminds us that God has no beginning and no end. Our family is a circle that is held together by the hope of God.

Mention people that you know who are looking for new hope in their lives.

End the prayer together saying:

Come, Lord Jesus, and give us hope. Amen.

Serve in some way this week:

- The color yellow often represents hope. Tie yellow ribbons around candy canes and deliver them to your neighbors. Explain the symbolism of the yellow ribbon and the candy cane.
- Choose an act of service from your fridge magnet that could be a sign of hope to your neighbourhood or the world.



ADVENT 2

PRINCE OF PEACE

Gather:

Begin by lighting the first and the second candle of your Advent Wreath as someone says: We light the candles of hope and peace. We are getting ready to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace.


Explore:

As a household collect some sticks from your yard or local bush. As you search for sticks, notice the way young shoots have grown from old stumps. Talk about the way families are often described by 'family trees', exploring the idea of branches and new growth, sharing a common life or heritage from a single trunk. Use string, wire or blu-tac to create people from your sticks.



Hicks, Edward, 1780-1849. Peaceable Kingdom, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imageLink.pl?RC=53085> [retrieved November 23, 2016].

Look at this painting. Talk about the animals you see in it. Talk about the problems some of those animals have getting along, e.g. lions tend to eat lambs for dinner. Look at the people in the background. Note that when Mr. Hicks painted this picture Indians and white settlers were at war in America, but that the people in the picture seem to be talking peaceably.



Read the passage from Isaiah below or watch the Isaiah 11:1-9 animated clip at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GjL44eSNXw> Discuss: Which line from the passage stood out to you? The background that this passage speaks of on the branch of Israel's family tree, a branch which Jesus' family came from. After reading, if you like create other pictures of animals together that don't normally get along.

Hang your stick people on the Christmas tree as a reminder that Jesus came from Jesse family line and is the Prince of Peace.

Read:

Have someone read from the bible

Isaiah 11:1-9 (NIRV) A Branch Will Come From Jesse's Family Line

Pray:

Join hands around the advent wreath and someone says:


The Advent wreath is a circle that has no beginning and no end. It reminds us that God has no beginning and no end. Our family is a circle that is held together by the peace of God.

Mention people you know who are looking for new peace in their lives.

End the prayer together saying:

Come, Lord Jesus, and give us peace. Amen.

Serve in some way this week:

- Buy lollipops and attach a copy of Luke 2:14 or another verse about peace to each lollipop to make "peace pops." Distribute the peace pops in your neighbourhood as a peaceful gift.
 - Choose an act of service from your fridge magnet that you could do this week as a sign of the coming of peace to your neighbourhood or to the world.
- 

ADVENT 3

WORDS INTO PLOWSHEARS

Gather:

Begin by lighting the first, second and the third candle of your Advent Wreath as someone says:

We light the candles of hope, peace and joy. We are getting ready to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, who is the joy in our lives.

Read:

Have someone read from the bible
Isaiah 35:1-10 (NIRV) The Joy of the Lord's People



Explore:

Discuss: Which verse/s stand out from the Bible reading?

The third Sunday of Advent traditionally is connected with joy. The joy that Jesus brings isn't the same as just having a smile on our face. Jesus brings a real joy that, no matter what, God loves us. Sometimes people say that real joy is contagious – we cannot keep it to ourselves.

Questions

- I wonder how we can be filled with joy?
- I wonder who Isaiah may be talking about when he says the blind will see? Who does that remind you of?
- I wonder how we can share joy with others? What can you do in your family to share joy?

Make a list of how God has been good to your family. Keep the list somewhere prominent to remind you that Jesus brings Joy to our lives.



Pray

Join hand around the advent wreath and someone says:

The Advent wreath is a circle that has no beginning and no end. It reminds us that God has no beginning and no end. Our family is a circle that is held together by the joy of God.

Mention people they know who are looking for joy in their lives.

End the prayer together saying:

Come, Lord Jesus, and give us joy. Amen.

Serve in some way this week:

- Write compliments on post-it notes and leave them somewhere for the person to see. You'll bring a smile to their faces!
- Choose an act of service from your fridge magnet that you could do this week that will bring joy to your neighbourhood or to the world.

- 1.You're an awesome friend.
- 2.You're a gift to those around you.
- 3.You're a smart cookie.
- 4.You are awesome!
- 5.You have impeccable manners.
- 6.I like your style.
- 7.You have the best laugh.
- 8.I appreciate you.
- 9.You are the most perfect you there is.
- 10.You are enough.
- 11.You're strong.
- 12>Your perspective is refreshing.
- 13.I'm grateful to know you.
- 14.You light up the room.
- 15.You deserve a hug right now.
- 16.You should be proud of yourself.
- 17.You're more helpful than you realize.
- 18.You have a great sense of humor.
- 19.You've got an awesome sense of humor!
- 20.You are really courageous.

<https://www.happier.com/blog/nice-things-to-say-100-compliments/>



ADVENT 4

IMMANUEL

Gather:

Begin by lighting the first, second, third and fourth candle of your Advent Wreath, as well as the 5th candle (the Christ candle), as someone says:

We light the candles of hope, peace, joy and love. We are getting ready to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, who is love.



Read:

Have someone read from the bible:

Isaiah 7:14 (NIRV)

14 The Lord himself will give you a sign. The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel.

Matthew 1:21-23 (NIRV)

21 She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That's because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, 23 "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel." The name Immanuel means "God with us."

Matthew 28:20 (NIRV)

20 Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end."



Explore:

What does Immanuel mean?
What does the name 'Jesus' mean?
When is God with us?
When do you feel that God is close?

"I will be with you" is God's promise to us always. It was God's promise for hundreds of years before Jesus was born, it was God's promise with us when Jesus was alive, and is God's promise to us forever.

God loved us so much that he sent his son Jesus to save us and remind us that God is with us.

Cut out and decorate a heart & hang it on your Christmas tree to remind you that God is Love and is with us always.

Pray

Join hands around the advent wreath and someone says:

The Advent wreath is a circle that has no beginning and no end. It reminds us that God has no beginning and no end. Our family is a circle that is held together by God's love.

Mention people you know who are looking for God's love in their lives.

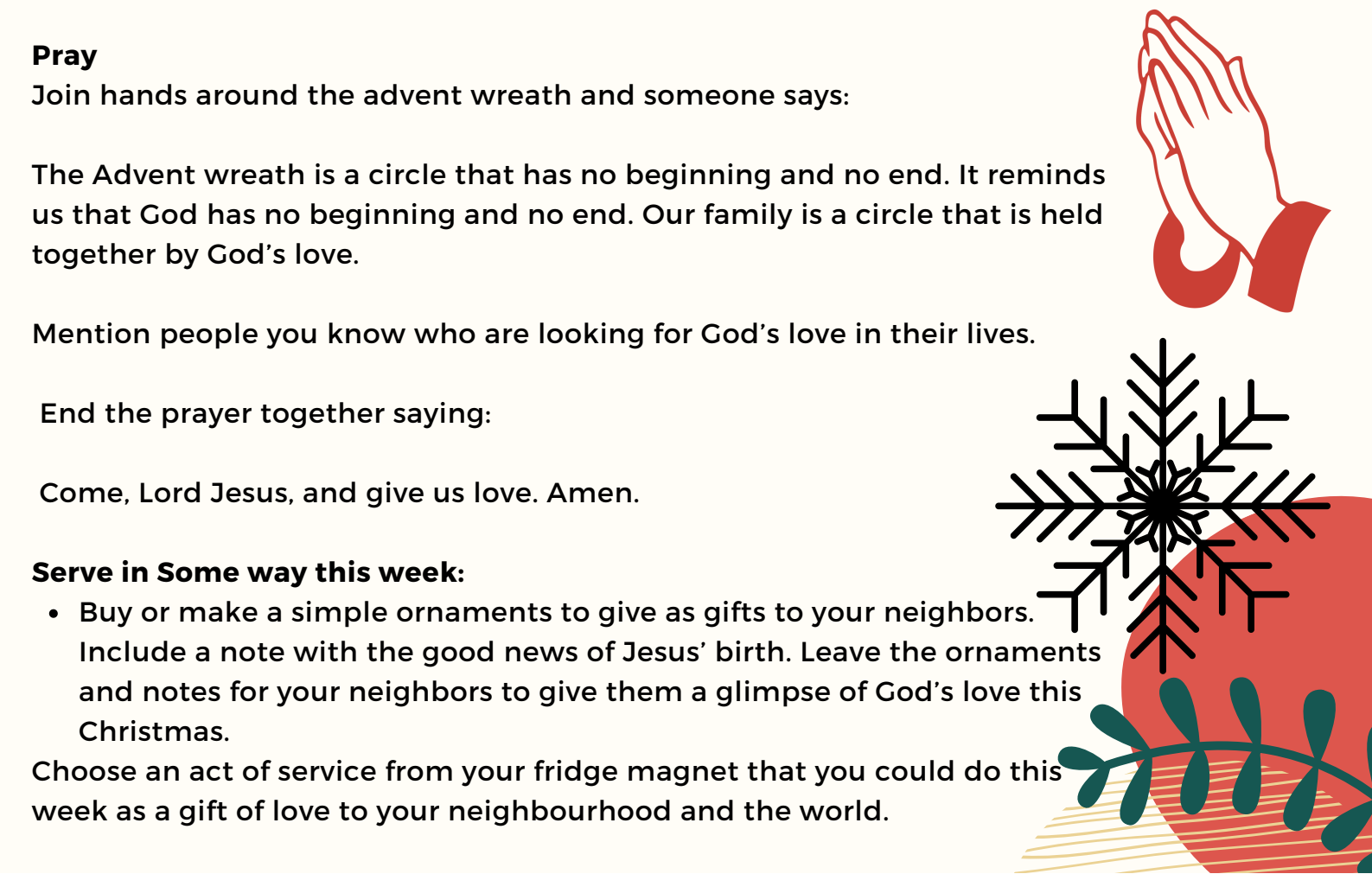
End the prayer together saying:

Come, Lord Jesus, and give us love. Amen.

Serve in Some way this week:

- Buy or make a simple ornaments to give as gifts to your neighbors. Include a note with the good news of Jesus' birth. Leave the ornaments and notes for your neighbors to give them a glimpse of God's love this Christmas.

Choose an act of service from your fridge magnet that you could do this week as a gift of love to your neighbourhood and the world.



CHRISTMAS

JESUS IS BORN



Gather:

Begin by lighting all the candles of your Advent Wreath as someone says:

We light the candles of hope, peace, joy and love. We also light the Christ candle. We are ready to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, who is the gift of hope, peace, joy and love.

Read:

Have someone read from the bible:

Or watch the Vegie Tales version of the story at
<http://stpaulsstaffordathome.weebly.com/christmas-2016.html>

Luke 2:1- 20 - Jesus Is Born

MERRY
christmas

Explore:

What is your favourite part of the Christmas Story?
Open the M&M's and move your M&M around as someone reads the poem.

Pray

Join hands around the advent wreath and someone says:

The Advent wreath is a circle that has no beginning and no end. It reminds us that God has no beginning and no end. Our family is a circle that is held together by God's hope, peace, joy & love.

Mention people you know who are looking for Jesus in their lives.

End the prayer together saying:

Thanks you that you came, Lord Jesus. Amen.

