

Weekly Faith Formation Update

November 30- December 4, 2020

[Advent in an Envelope: A Wonderful Way to Help Families Form Faith](#)

As a young mom with zero experience celebrating Advent at home, I sewed a Jesse Tree calendar, decorated 24 paper symbols to tuck inside the pockets, and hung it up on our living room wall. The idea to make the tree had been planted in my mind by an older church member who showed me hers. “It’s a Jesse Tree,” she’d said. “We read a Bible story each day and then one of the kids gets to hang the matching symbol. It helps us focus on the real meaning of Christmas.”

Since I’d spent the previous day in a crowded mall fretting about how many gifts I had to buy and peeling candy canes from the sticky fingers of my kids as they waited for a photo op with Santa, refocusing our attention on Jesus’ birth seemed like a very good idea.

And so that year, for a week of nights before Christmas and with visions of devout children dancing in my head, I made our Jesse Tree. I didn’t finish it until December 19th. I know this because I remember having to speed-read our way through the Bible stories. I also remember that the whole taking-turns-hanging-the-ornaments thing didn’t go that well either.

Still, we persisted. We never did have the very merry Martha Stewart-ish Jesse Tree experience I’d initially imagined, but 25 years later I still hang that same Jesse Tree on my wall. I have to—it’s the first thing our now grown-up kids look for when they come home for Christmas.

The takeaway: faith practices don’t have to be perfect to have a lifelong impact.

Which brings me to Advent 2020: a month of days during which already-overwhelmed parents will be spending most, if not all, of their time hunkered down with their kids at home. This year more than ever, the church has a wonderful opportunity to encourage and equip families with children to practice Advent at home in ways that can last a lifetime. Read on for a surprisingly simple but super meaningful way to supply busy families with tools they can use to nurture faith at home this December.

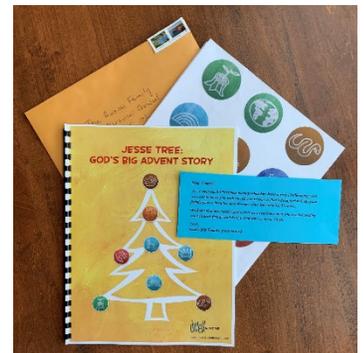
Advent in an Envelope

Mail (or hand deliver!) to each household a 9 x 12 envelope with the following tucked inside:

- One set of colorful [Jesse Tree Ornaments](#)
- One copy of the [Jesse Tree: God’s Big Advent Story devotional](#)
- A warm and friendly note. Here’s mine:

Dear Family,

As we approach Christmas during what has been a very challenging year, we want to bless you with an Advent resource that’s designed to help your family pause, breathe, and wonder your way into God’s story. We hope that this simple gift serves as a reminder that you are beloved by your church family and by the God who came to earth.



[FAITH5: Advent | FaithInkubators](#)

Using the formula of Share, Read, Talk, Pray, Bless, families gather, light a candle, and engage in a daily check-in.

Read the Bible verse assigned:

- Advent Week #1 (Dec 3-9): The Gift of Hope – The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” — “a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” (Mark 1:1-3)
- Advent Week #2 (Dec 10-16): The Gift of Peace – For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)
- Advent Week #3 (Dec 17-21): The Gift of Joy – And why has this happened to me [Elizabeth], that the mother of my Lord, [Mary] comes to me? For as soon as I heard your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. (Luke 1:43-44)
- Advent Week #4 (Dec 22-24): The Gift of Love – For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)
- Christmas Week #1 (Dec 25-30): The Gift of Jesus Christ – While [Mary & Joseph] were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son % wrapped him in bands of cloth, & laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6-7)
- Christmas II (Dec 31-Jan 5) – The Gift of Angels & Shepherds – And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.” 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.” (Luke 2: 13-15)
- Epiphany (Jan 6): The Gift of the Kings – After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem & asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” (Matt. 2:1-2)

Talk about the Bible verse using daily questions.

- Advent Week #1 – God gives us hope. How were you a messenger of hope today?
- Advent Week #2 – God gives us peace. How did you help promote peace today? How were you a peacemaker?
- Advent Week #3 – God gives us joy. Did you experience something today that brought you joy? Did you do something joyful for someone else?
- Week #4 – God gives us love. Did you share your love with someone today? Did someone share their love with you? Is there someone who is lonely or sad that would love to hear from you?
- Christmas Week #1 – God gives us Jesus Christ. How can you share the love of Jesus Christ with someone today?
- Christmas Week #2: God gives us shepherds and angels. How did you share the Christmas story to today? Who has been an “angel” to you today?
- Epiphany Day: God gives us the star and the magi. How did you follow Jesus today? What is the best gift God has given you?

Pray together by filling in the blanks:

Dear God, Thank you for _____. Help me _____. Amen.

Bless each person by making the sign of the cross on each other’s hands or foreheads, saying:

“Blessed are you, follower of Jesus Christ, go and share God’s love. Amen.”