

Advent 2020
with Oakland Baptist Church



we need a little
hope  peace  love  joy

Christmas!



*Haul out the holly
Put up the tree before my spirit falls again
Fill up the stocking
I may be rushing things, but deck the halls again now*

Johnny Mathis famously sang those lyrics in his 1986 version of the song "We Need a Little Christmas." The song was known prior to Mathis, but his recording made it a seasonal favorite. "We need a little Christmas," the chorus rings, "right this very minute."

I think we all can agree after the first eleven months of this year, we could all use a little Christmas. Moreover, we could use the message Christmas brings: hope, peace, joy, and love. Our Advent and Christmas focus this year is based on this idea. As the chorus of the song says, "We've grown a little colder, grown a little sadder, grown a little older" and we could all use "a little angel sitting on our shoulder" to remind us of the hope we find in the Christ child.

Inside this book you will find a variety of interactive ways to include Christ in your Advent preparations. Use the directions and the supplies provided for each activity. Any materials not provided in your bag should be easily found around your home.

Consider making the time you work on your Advent bag activities a device free time. You could even put your phones/devices in the bag while you are spending uninterrupted time with God. My prayer is the contents of this bag will provide a little Christmas joy in your Advent journey! After everything that has taken place this year, we all need a little Christmas!

-Pastor Jeff

This booklet has three sections. The adult section begins on page 3, the youth section on page 18, and the children's section on page 31.

November 29: First Sunday of Advent

Worship, 8:30AM and 11:15AM (Please make reservations!)
Children's and Youth Advent Kick-off Party, 4PM

December 2:

Midweek Conversation on Hope via Zoom (Meeting ID 713 378 3329)

December 6: Second Sunday of Advent

Worship, 8:30AM and 11:15AM (Please make reservations!)
Children's Pageant Rehearsal, 4PM

December 9:

Midweek Conversation on Peace via Zoom (Meeting ID 713 378 3329)

December 13: Third Sunday of Advent

Worship, 8:30AM and 11:15AM (Please make reservations)
Drive-Through Children's Christmas Pageant, 5PM

December 16:

Midweek Conversation on Love via Zoom (Meeting ID 713 378 3329)

December 17

Service of Remembrance in the Sanctuary, 5:30PM-6PM

December 18

Outdoor viewing of 2018 animated version of *The Grinch* & S'mores, 5:30PM

December 20: Fourth Sunday of Advent

Worship, 8:30AM and 11:15AM (Please make reservations)
Carol Sing-a-Long via Zoom, 5PM-5:30PM

December 21:

Christmas Carol Calls, 5PM-6:30PM

December 23: Eve of the Eve

Communion and Candlelight, 5:30PM-6:00PM (Please make reservations)

December 24: Christmas Eve

Communion and Candlelight, 4PM-4:30PM & 5:30PM-6PM (Please make reservations)
Communion and Candlelight Drive-Through, 4:45PM-5:15PM

All of the Communion and Candlelight services will be the same. We are offering multiple opportunities to remain safe during COVID-19.

To register of worship visit: oaklandchurch.com/sign-me-up



*We Need
a Little Christmas*

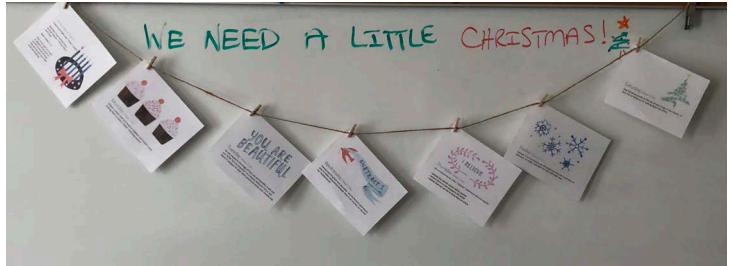


Adult Section

We need a little Advent Calendar

Traditional Advent calendars now take on many shapes, sizes and forms. In your bag you will find seven pieces of card stock paper, each with activities for four days of Advent. There is also a festive paper bag with twine, and clothespins in it. Cut the Advent cards and order them from the first Sunday of Advent through Christmas Day. Each Sunday the card provides a scripture passage, brief meditation, and prayer. The cards for all of the other days of the week provide a suggestion for a way to prepare your heart for Advent and celebrate the season.

You can keep your cards neatly in a pile rotating the one on top each day, you can use the twine and clothespins to display the cards as shown in the picture, or you can find another creative way to display and use them.



We need a little Advent Candle

Christians have been using Advent candles to help celebrate the season since 1839. The most common tradition includes four candles, one for each of the Sundays before Christmas, and a white candle called the Christ Candle that is lighted on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. In your Advent bag we've provided you with one votive candle and holder. (You are welcome to purchase additional candles if you choose to do this activity with a full set.)

Also, in your Advent bag you will find a piece of vellum paper containing the themes for each Sunday of Advent and Christmas. We suggest you color the vellum with washable markers, cut them out, and each week use clear tape to wrap the week's word around your included votive candle holder. Change the word with each passing week. Consider placing this holder on your dinner table all throughout Advent. Choose a day each week to light the candle, then read the included Scripture, prayers, activity, and real life faith story related to each candle.

At the beginning of Advent there will be a little light showing through the vellum paper, but each week as the candle burns down the light will show brighter through the paper as you get closer to Jesus, the Light of the World, coming into our midst.

We need a little Hope

Week of November 29

The Candle of Hope

For the first week of Advent, we light the candle of Hope. We give thanks that God is present with us. This gives us reason to hope.

Scripture: Lord, show me Your ways. Teach me how to follow You. Guide me in Your truth. Teach me. You are God my Savior. I put my hope in You all day long.
-Psalm 25:4-5

Candle Lighting: We light this first Advent candle, the candle of Hope. The candle reminds us to look for signs of God's presence all around us.

Real Life Faith Story: Six year old Molly forgot to give her offering one week during Sunday School. That week the money was going to Nothing But Nets, an organization that distributes mosquito nets in Western Africa. The nets allow people protection at night from the mosquitoes that carry the malaria virus. Molly felt bad for forgetting, so she decided to raise money a different way. She would open a lemonade stand! That same year, Logan, who was turning seven, didn't ask for any presents for his birthday. Instead he asked for donations to a worthy cause. The cause he and his mom chose was Nothing But Nets. Logan and Molly's moms were friends, so when Molly heard that Logan wanted to fight malaria too, she asked him to be partner in the lemonade stand. Their first lemonade stand was held in 2008. Logan and Molly earned \$600 that day! \$600 turned into \$1800 when both kids' grandparents agreed to match their total. After seeing how much they could raise in just one day, Logan and Molly decided to make the lemonade stand an annual event! A few years later, they switched charities to Imagine No Malaria. With help from their grandparents and churches who heard about their lemonade stand, the kids have raised over \$101,000! Each net costs \$10, so they have provided around 10,100 families with life-saving protection! Molly and Logan were just 6 and 7 when they started their lemonade stand. Often, we think we are too young (or too old) to step out in faith.

Wonder: Is there an idea you have been praying about that would bring hope to others? How could you take a first step of faith? Trust that God will guide you as you serve God by serving others.

Pray: Blessed are you, Lord, King of the Universe. You sent your Son to be the Light of the World, providing hope to all. Amen.

Do: During the weeks of Christmas and New Years, Oakland will serve as an overflow site for the Bethel Men's Shelter. A number of men without a home will be sleeping in the basement area of our church every night. As a way of showing hope to these gentlemen, we want to provide them with necessities they rarely receive. In your Advent bag you will find a gallon size freezer bag. Please fill the bag with the following items and bring to the church office before December 20th. The bags will be distributed to the men while they are staying at Oakland.

- Hand warmers
- Gloves
- A Pair of Socks
- Chapstick
- Small lotion
- Individual tissue packets
- Individual hand sanitizer
- Hard candies
- A note of encouragement



Candle Snuffing: May God's hope shine in and through us even as we blow out this candle.

We need a little Peace

Week of December 6

The Candle of Peace

For the second week of Advent, we light the candle of Peace. We give thanks that God is present in our relationships, bringing peace where there is division.

Scripture: Let the peace that Christ gives rule in your hearts. As parts of one body, you were appointed to live in peace and be thankful. -Colossians 3:15

Candle Lighting: We light this second Advent candle, the candle of Peace. This candle reminds us that God can create peace where there is trouble and conflict.

Real Life Faith Story: Nam Chaa lived in a government-run welfare school in a remote region of Thailand until she graduated from high school. Her parents lived far away, struggling to make enough money to survive. Chris and Dora Barbee, serving as missionaries, offered to host a youth group in their home and teach music lessons. More than 30 Thai youth attend fellowship in the Barbees' home each week! Nam Chaa began attending the youth group when she was a sophomore and started to learn about Jesus and his love for her. "Nam Chaa learned that she could pray to Jesus about her problems and he would answer her," said Chris. "She began inviting her friends to pray to him, and Jesus began to work in their lives." After graduating from high school, Nam Chaa moved to attend a university. "It's difficult for our students to continue to grow in their faith when they leave to attend university," said Chris. "There are very few campus ministries or other followers of Jesus at the universities, and it's hard for them to find community." Nam Chaa met another Jesus follower at school, and they began dating. "They are a huge encouragement to one another," said Chris. Together, the couple drives 45 minutes on a motorcycle each week to attend Sunday worship! "My friends ask me why I attend worship in Roi Et," said Nam Chaa. "I tell them that when I worship Jesus, I have a peace and a joy that nothing else can create!" The peace that Jesus gives is often found in community.

Wonder: With what groups of people do you spend time ? Are there people outside your group that would be blessed by an invitation to join you? How could an invitation bring peace to someone?

Pray: Blessed are you, Lord, King of the Universe. You sent your Son to be the Light of the World, providing hope and peace to all. Amen.

Do: Our world is filled with noise. Rarely do we take the time to just sit in silence and enjoy the peace that comes from not being preoccupied with technology. For at least one night this week turn off all technology. Turn off the television, put away your phone, and close your computer or laptop. Try one of these non-tech activities instead:

Grab a blanket and stare up at the stars

Put a puzzle together

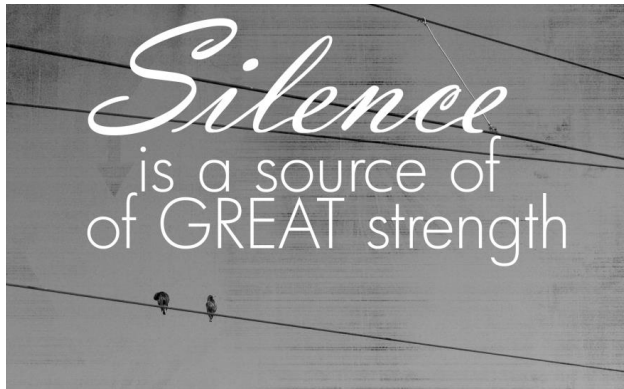
Journal your thoughts

Enjoy a long meditative bath

Read a book (a real book! Not kindle)

Play a board game

Write notes of gratitude to neighbors



Candle Snuffing: May God's hope and peace keep growing in and through us, even as we blow out this candle.

We need a little Love

Week of December 13

The Candle of Love

For the third week of Advent, we light the candle of Love. We give thanks that God shows us what love is.

Scripture: Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. -1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Candle Lighting: We light this third Advent candle, the candle of Love. This candle reminds us that God sent God's son, Jesus, to show us what love looks like.

Real Life Faith Story: Aafira was reared in a traditional Muslim home in the Middle East. Among other things, the family believed that a person had to do good works and recite structured prayers in order to gain favor with God. Aafira believed everything she had been taught and strictly followed the rules of her religion. Eli and Rachel serve as field personnel in a medical clinic for refugees and share their faith in Jesus with their Muslim neighbors. Aafira came to work at the clinic. "Over time, Aafira watched our team and how we related to God," said Rachel. "She began to long for something more from the God she worshipped." Eli, Rachel, and their team at the clinic lived out the gospel among their Muslim friends. Aafira was shocked when Rachel did not get angry when she made a mistake. Instead, Rachel would gently remind her of what was expected. Aafira watched the team treat their patients with kindness and respect. "These small, daily acts of living out the gospel caused Aafira to want to know more about God, and to ask about Jesus," said Rachel. "We began to study the Bible together, and she had an encounter with Jesus." Aafira is now following Jesus and continuing to learn more about what it means to have faith in him. "We live, work, play, and study together," said Rachel. "As we simply lived out the Gospel and sought to be light in a world of darkness, the Holy Spirit drew Aafira to himself."

Wonder: Small acts of love can have a big impact. Think of someone who may be going through a difficult time and needs to feel God's love this week. With what small acts of love could you gift this person?

Pray: Blessed are you, Lord, King of the Universe. You sent your Son to be the Light of the World, providing hope, peace, and love to all. Amen.

Do: Surprise someone by delivering dinner. An easy way to do this would be having a pizza delivered to their door. Pray a blessing over the person or family you choose to serve. Another way to show love would be delivering cookies (preferably store bought this year) with a note of encouragement. Or volunteer to babysit for a family with young children so they can Christmas shop or have a nice date night. Be on the lookout for people who are lonely and find creative ways to show them the love of Jesus.



Candle Snuffing: May God's hope, peace, and love keep growing in and through us, even as we blow out this candle.

Looking Ahead: Go ahead and read the "Do" activity in the section titled "We Need a Little Christmas." This activity needs to be completed before December 22nd. You can save the devotion and candle lighting for Christmas Eve/Day.

We need a little Joy

Week of December 20

The Candle of Joy

For the fourth week of Advent, we light the candle of Joy. We give thanks that God gives us joy.

Scripture: Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful! Let everyone know how joyful you are. The Lord is coming soon. Do not worry about anything. No matter what happens, tell God about everything. Ask and pray and give thanks to God. Then God's peace will watch over your hearts and your minds. God will do this because you belong to Christ Jesus.
-Philippians 4:4-7

Candle Lighting: We light this fourth Advent candle, the candle of Joy. This candle reminds us to rejoice because God is with us.

Real Life Faith Story: Ten year old Ian realized that with God, all things are possible! "I was laying in bed before I got up for school one day and was wondering about cancer and stuff like the flu. Suddenly, God put this idea in my brain to set out jars and collect money for kids in the hospital." After talking and praying with his parents about his idea, he came up with a plan of action. "I wrote a letter to my pastor about my idea called "Tips for Treatment" and he said YES!" His pastor gladly gave Ian the opportunity to share with his church the idea that God planted in him to collect money to help kids in the hospital. Ian raised over \$600 by placing his handmade Tips for Treatment containers around the community. Ian was able to buy a lot toys, stuffed animals and games for kids in his local children's hospital. He knew that these small gifts wouldn't cure their illnesses, but he could put a smile on their face and bring joy to them while they were away from home and hurting. Ian understood the importance of sharing the love of Christ with others. His willingness to say yes to God also inspired other children in the church to serve others. Some made special cards for kids in the same hospital, others set up a lemonade stand to raise money for other causes. Ian later said, "God planted that seed in my heart. It grew into a flower that then made seeds which spread to others!" Ian's

story reminds us all that big things start with an idea the size of a mustard seed. If we are open and listening, we also will be given seeds from God, but we have to be willing to put in labor to help the seeds grow.

Wonder: What kind of seeds would you like to plant in your garden that would bring the joy of Christ to others? Next time you talk with God, ask God for ideas and then trust God will work alongside you as you plant and harvest for God's glory.

Pray: Blessed are you, Lord, King of the Universe. You sent your Son to be the Light of the World, providing hope, peace, love, and joy to all. Amen.

Do: Most everyone enjoys pancakes. One night this week prepare pancakes for dinner, only pour them in the shape of the letters J-O-Y; or pour them in the traditional round shape and use chocolate chips to create a smiley face on each pancake. As you eat the pancakes, talk about what brings you joy.

Consider making pancakes using this recipe from "The Joy of Cooking" recipe book. You will find a red spatula in your bag to help with the mixing.

Ingredients:

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 3 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 3 slightly beaten eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 6 tablespoons melted butter
- 2 to 2 1/2 cups milk

Directions:

1. Whisk together flour, salt, sugar and baking powder into a large bowl.
2. Combine eggs, butter and milk in a second bowl.
3. Mix the liquid ingredients quickly into the dry ingredients – don't over mix. Add more milk to thin out if necessary.
4. Allow mixture to sit for 10-15 minutes before cooking if possible. Pancakes will be lighter if rested first.

5. Heat griddle prior to adding batter. Test to see if it is hot enough by dropping a few drops of water into the pan. The water should “dance” across the pan. If the water evaporates the pan is too hot, if the water sits and bubbles it is too cold.
6. You may add a bit of butter to the pan before cooking if desired.
7. Pour the batter from your spoon into the pan. Wait 2-3 minutes before turning the pancake. When bubbles start to appear across the pancake surface they are ready to turn.
8. Turn the pancake only once. Check the second side to see if it is done and then remove the pancake to a platter warming in your oven.
9. Continue with steps 6-8 until all pancakes are done.
10. Serve with syrup and butter if desired.



Candle Snuffing: May God’s hope, peace, love, and joy flow in and through us, even as we blow out this candle.

Christmas Carol Calls

Monday, December 21, 5:00 – 6:30 pm

You are encouraged to call one of our homebound friends and sing or play a recording of a favorite Christmas Carol! You can also call grandparents, neighbors, and friends to wish them a Merry Christmas from Oakland Baptist Church!

Please contact Suzanne Ringer by December 17 if you need information on who to call.

We need a little Christmas

December 24/25

The Candle of Christ

We light the candle for Christ and give thanks for God sending God's only son, Jesus, as the Savior of the world.

Scripture: There were shepherds living in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were taking care of their sheep. An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. Here's how you will know I am telling you the truth. You'll find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger." -Luke 2:8-12

Candle Lighting: We light the candle for Christ and celebrate God's arrival into our world. Thanks be to God!

Real Life Faith Story: Sarah moved to a new town with her family right before Christmas. They knew no one. "Where do you think we will go to church on Christmas Eve?" her husband asked. Soon thereafter Sarah ran into Mary Lou at the grocery store and Mary Lou invited Sarah and her family to a new church Mary Lou was helping grow. "We don't have a building yet," Mary Lou told her; "we are meeting in a barn." The old, gray barn was not much to look at, but it served the purpose for a place to meet. The only problem was the barn did not have heat. Mary Lou told Sarah that she needed to wear gloves and a hat and perhaps bring a sweater to the Christmas Eve service. "It will be cold," she said, "the weatherman is calling for a blustery night." On Christmas Eve Sarah and her husband bundled up the family in warm sweaters and headed to the barn; only it was no longer just an old, gray barn. It had been transformed into a nativity scene—a real one with a real manger and real sheep and a cow and a donkey. Hay was everywhere. The eyes of all the children were filled with sheer wonder. Amid the animals were people. The woman wore a blue robe, and the man was in old, brown sackcloth tied with

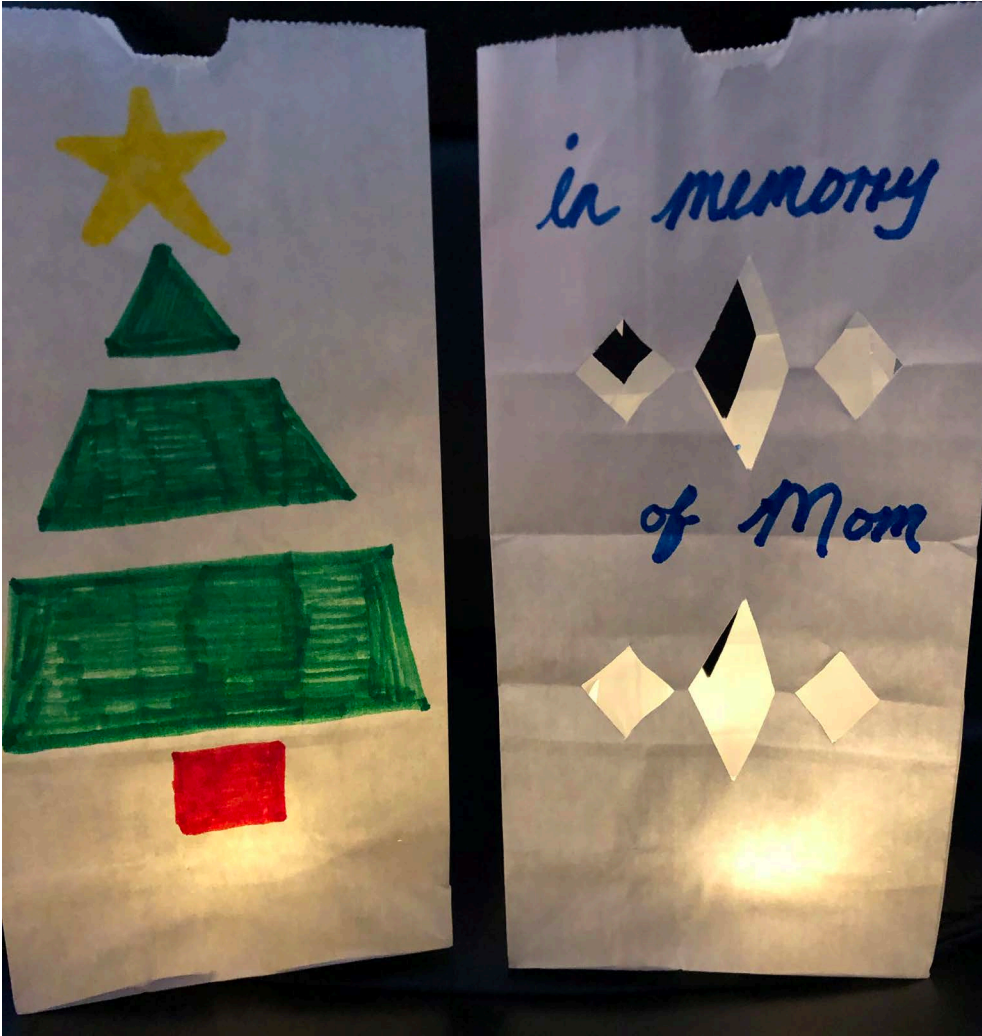
a rope. He held a staff, and she held an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. They were not just people; they were the Holy Family. They were surrounded by shepherds tending the flock. The service did not contain any music or sermon. Just the presence of the Holy Child, God's light given to all the world. Sarah and her family not only found a place to worship on Christmas Eve, but a church family where they belonged—even if it was a cold, old, gray barn.

Wonder: A simple invitation can open the door to something much grander. It might even change the course of someone's life. God sent Jesus into the world for all people, but God expects us to participate in the process of letting people know Jesus is here. Who do you know that needs a church family? Are you willing to invite them to be a part of your church family?

Pray: Blessed are you, Lord, King of the Universe. You sent your Son to be the Light of the World, providing hope, peace, love, joy, and the promise of Jesus to all. Amen.

Do: Light is a symbol we use at Christmas. Find your white luminary bag in your Advent bag. Decorate it as creatively as you wish to represent being the light of Christ. Consider using stencils to cut shapes or designs. A quick Google search should give you plenty of ideas if you need help getting started. You may also choose to write on the bag the name of a loved one who represents the light of Christ to you; or the name of someone who has gone on to be with Jesus in heaven. Deliver your luminary bag to the church office by 3:00PM on December 22nd. The church will provide a battery operated candle for each bag. We will use the bags to line the front of our church sanctuary steps for our worship services on December 23rd and 24th.

Candle Snuffing: May God's hope, peace, love, joy, and presence flow in and through us, even as we blow out this candle.





If ever we need a little Christmas, it is this year! And while we know that Christ has been with us and continues to be with us, there is something about Christmas music and Christmas decorations that lifts our spirits. But we need more than just twinkling lights and Pentatonix latest Christmas album. We need to make time and space to prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth. Within this section you will find activities, devotions, and prayers that will do just that.

We will kick off the Advent season with an in-person, outdoor party on Sunday, November 29 from 4PM-5PM. There will be pre-packaged food (Christmas Tree Cakes!!!), and socially distant crafts, and games.

We need a little Christmas!
Leigh Reynolds

We need a little Advent Wreath

Play-doh is not just for children! Enjoy an excuse to have some fun and be creative. Unlike a traditional Advent Wreath, this wreath is personal and palm-sized—just right for a bedside table or desk. All elements of this wreath kit can be found in your Advent Bag.

Materials needed:

Foam square to use as the base of the wreath

1 white tea-light candle to serve as the center Christ Candle

4 blue birthday candles to serve as the Advent Candles

Green Play-Doh to wrap around the tea-light Christ Candle

Glitter to add a touch of joyous whimsy to the green Play-Doh

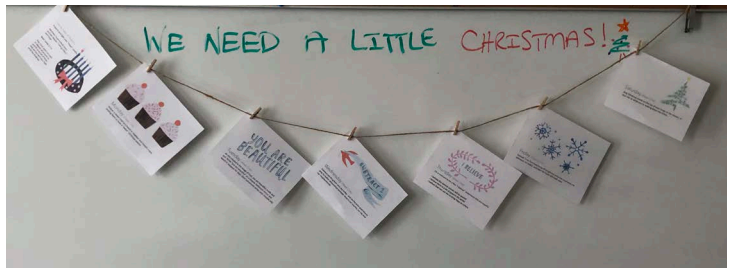
Prayer scroll containing child-friendly prayers to recite when lighting each candle



We need a little Advent Calendar

Traditional Advent calendars now take on many shapes, sizes and forms. In your bag you will find seven pieces of card stock paper, each with activities for four days of Advent. There is also a festive paper bag with twine, and clothespins in it. Cut the Advent cards and order them from the first Sunday of Advent through Christmas Day. Each Sunday the card provides a scripture passage, brief meditation, and prayer. The cards for all of the other days of the week provide a suggestion for a way to prepare your heart for Advent and celebrate the season.

You can keep your cards neatly in a pile rotating the one on top each day, you can use the twine and clothespins to display the cards as shown in the picture, or you can find another creative way to display and use them.



We need a little Advent Candle

Christians have been using Advent candles to help celebrate the season since 1839. The most common tradition includes four candles, one for each of the Sundays before Christmas, and a white candle called the Christ Candle that is lighted on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. In your Advent bag we've provided you with one votive candle and holder.

Also, in your Advent bag you will find a piece of vellum paper containing the themes for each Sunday of Advent and Christmas. We suggest you color the vellum with washable markers, cut them out, and each week use clear tape to wrap the week's word around your included votive candle holder. Change the word with each passing week. At the beginning of Advent there will be a little light showing through the vellum paper, but each week as the candle burns down the light will show brighter through the paper as you get closer to Jesus, the Light of the World, coming into our midst.

You can also tape them to a window and during the day enjoy the sun shining through your colorful creation.

We need a little Hope

Week of November 29

The Candle of Hope

For the first week of Advent, we light the candle of Hope. We give thanks that God is present with us. This gives us reason to hope.

Scripture: “In those days, after the suffering of that time, the sun will become dark, and the moon won't give its light. The stars will fall from the sky, and the planets and other heavenly bodies will be shaken. Then they will see the Human One coming in the clouds with great power and splendor. Then he will send the angels and gather together his chosen people from the four corners of the earth, from the end of the earth to the end of heaven.” -Mark 13:24-27

Candle Lighting: We light this first Advent candle, the candle of Hope. The candle reminds us to look for signs of God's presence all around us.

Reflect: Imagine waking up one day and the sun never comes out. You think, “Maybe there will be light in the sky as the day goes on.” You wait a whole day and into the night. You look up and search the sky and say to yourself, “Maybe there will be moon and star light.” But as the day goes on neither the sun nor the moon nor the stars has produced any light. You realize that you are in complete darkness and don't know where to turn.

We are made for the light. Our bodies need Vitamin D and our skin absorbs the sun's rays so that we can be healthy. But as much as we physically need the sunlight, we need God's light in our lives even more.

We have been waiting to see God's face shine, and today we see that it shines in God's Son, Jesus. As we turn towards Jesus, he teaches us how to turn towards the light of God. Our hope is found in Jesus.

Pray: O God of Hope, I want your light in my life. Sometimes there is so much darkness I don't know where to turn. Help me to turn towards Jesus today so that I can see your face. Amen.

Do:

Materials needed:

- Magic Rainbow scratch off ornament
- Sharp scratch off stick

Fill in the blank for this sentence: "I hope I get _____ for Christmas." Does hoping for something mean you definitely get it? Often we use the word hope to mean the same thing as a wish—like with our answer about Christmas. In the Bible the word hope is used differently. The hope we receive from God is not just a happy wish. The hope God gives is always real, always true. We can trust that God will keep God's promises.

Of course, it is sometimes hard to place your hope in someone you can't see. It is hard for us to remember that God is always with us because we can't see God or touch God. Using your scratch off stick, write the word "HOPE" on your scratch off ornament. What happened to the paper? Did you see something that wasn't there before?

At Christmas we celebrate that God is with us, even through our darkest moments. At first your ornament was dark and void of color, but after you wrote the word "HOPE" did you notice the bright, colorful background that shined through?

Read Romans 15:4 and Psalm 147:10-11. According to these verses, where can we find hope? What makes God happy? Often as we prepare for Christmas, our hope is in presents or stuff we might receive. During this Advent season, let's work on placing our hope in God's faithful love instead of stuff.

Finish coloring all of your ornament and then hang it on your tree as a reminder that the light of Christ shines through the darkness.



We need a little Peace

Week of December 6

The Candle of Peace

For the second week of Advent, we light the candle of Peace. We give thanks that God is present in our relationships, bringing peace where there is division.

Scripture: "A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse; a branch will sprout from his roots. The Lord's spirit will rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of planning and strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord. He will delight in fearing the Lord. He won't judge by appearances, nor decide by hearsay." -Isaiah 11:1-3

Candle Lighting: We light this second Advent candle, the candle of Peace. This candle reminds us that God can create peace where there is trouble and conflict.

Reflect: This time of the year can be a big bag of mixed thoughts and feelings with the long lists of "to-dos" coupled with anticipation of what comes next. The semester is coming to a close, and that probably means tests, exams and projects are on the horizon,. And on top of all of that, there is the holiday frenzy of decorating, purchasing, cooking, and visiting family. It can be exhausting just thinking about it!

But what if we did it differently? How would it feel to just allow the spirit of the Lord to rest upon us? Sitting still, taking a breath and being present is one way to allow God's spirit to be known to us; to guide us, to comfort us, to lift us up. It's hard, being still. There's so much to do... but if we can, a peace that passes all understanding will settle on us and then that list doesn't seem like such a big deal at all.

Pray: Gracious and loving God, thank you for your strength, wisdom, and understanding. Please send your loving spirit to be with me today and every day as I seek to be present in this world with peace and understanding. Amen.

Do:

Materials needed:

Angel Ornament

Paint or Markers

Using the wooden angel ornament provided, find a quiet and comfortable place in your house, and paint your angel. As you paint think about the situations, places, and people who bring you a sense of peace. After it dries, hang it on your tree or somewhere in your room that you will see often. Each time you see it, let it be a reminder of the peace that we have in Christ.



We need a little Love

Week of December 13

The Candle of Love

For the third week of Advent, we light the candle of Love. We give thanks that God shows us what love is.

Scripture: From Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for God's good news. God promised this good news about his Son ahead of time through his prophets in the holy scriptures. His Son was descended from David. He was publicly identified as God's Son with power through his resurrection from the dead, which was based on the Spirit of holiness. This Son is Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we have received God's grace and our appointment to be apostles. This was to bring all Gentiles to faithful obedience for his name's sake. You who are called by Jesus Christ are also included among these Gentiles. To those in Rome who are dearly loved by God and called to be God's people. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. -Romans 1:1-7

Candle Lighting: We light this third Advent candle, the candle of Love. This candle reminds us that God sent God's son, Jesus, to show us what love looks like.

Reflect: Do you ever need a reminder that you are loved? I imagine that the members of the church of Rome did from time to time. At the beginning of this long letter, Paul tells them that are loved – not only by him, but by God.

Perhaps more than anyone, Paul knew the power of God's love and grace. Just a few years before, he spent his days traveling from city to city looking for Christians – so that he could kill them. But God broke through to Saul, now Paul, in a dramatic way, and his life totally changed. Now, he identifies himself as a servant of God and he spends his time sharing the love of Jesus and starting churches.

Paul reminds us that we are called to belong to this God who loved us enough to come to earth and live among us, and that we, like the citizens of Rome, are ALL beloved. .

Pray: God thank you for all they ways that you love me and for all the people you've put in my life who love me. God use me in big ways and small ways to share your love with others.

Do: During the weeks of Christmas and New Years, Oakland will serve as an overflow site for the Bethel Men's Shelter. A number of men without a home will be sleeping in the basement area of our church every night. As a way of remind these gentlemen that they are loved, we want to provide them with necessities they rarely receive. In your Advent bag you will find a gallon size freezer bag. Please fill the bag with the following items and bring to the church office before December 20th. The bags will be distributed to the men while they are staying at Oakland.

- Hand warmers
- Gloves
- A Pair of Socks
- Chapstick
- Small lotion
- Individual tissue packets
- Individual hand sanitizer
- Hard candies
- A note of encouragement



Looking Ahead: Go ahead and read the "Do" activity in the section titled "We Need a Little Christmas." This activity needs to be completed before December 22nd. You can save the devotion and candle lighting for Christmas Eve/Day.

We need a little Joy

Week of December 20

The Candle of Joy

For the fourth week of Advent, we light the candle of Joy. We give thanks that God gives us joy.

Scripture: Strengthen the weak hands, and support the unsteady knees. Say to those who are panicking: "Be strong! Don't fear! Here's your God, coming with vengeance; with divine retribution God will come to save you." -Isaiah 35:3-4

Candle Lighting: We light this fourth Advent candle, the candle of Joy. This candle reminds us to rejoice because God is with us.

Reflect: "Where are you Christmas? Why can't I find you?" These words so sweetly sung by a young girl in one film interpretation of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* demonstrates something we all realize at one point or another. The festivities of celebrating the birth of Jesus can overwhelm the supposed joy we claim to feel. The message of the singer is as important as that of the song.

I've often wondered about the title of the movie. While that name describes the main conflict of the story, the version told in the year 2000 highlights something more beautiful: an amazing child's faithfulness to transforming a frantic reality into true Christmas joy.

That's the promise Isaiah delivers us from God. At the birth of the Savior, we will be strengthened in hand and heart, body and spirit, by the One who is faithful to us. How incredible that one so young might offer so much joy anew.

Pray: Amid the rush and hurry of the Christmas season, God, remind me of the message the Christ child will bring: that you are faithful in restoring your people. Challenge me to emphasize that truth this year while longing to receive that gift. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Do:

Materials needed:

- Joy Ornament
- Paint/Markers

Turn your favorite Christmas music up loud and decorate the wooden joy ornament that is in your bag. As you sing and paint think about all the things that bring joy to the Christmas season.



We need a little Christmas

December 24/25

The Candle of Christ

We light the candle for Christ and give thanks for God sending God's only son, Jesus, as the Savior of the world.

Scripture: Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors." -Luke 2:8-14

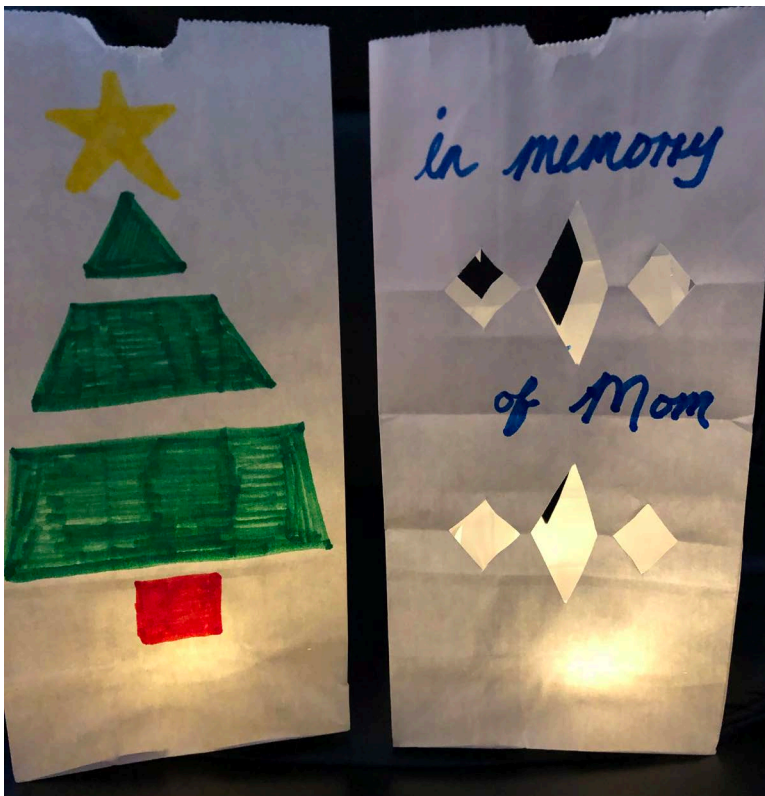
Reflect: I found a video on YouTube that shows how to make a Bible-time costume in five minutes without sewing. What did we do before the Internet gave instructions for everything? For the three years I played a shepherd in the church Christmas pageant I wore my Dad's bathrobe, and I used a broom handle as a shepherd's staff.

Some kids back then thought being a shepherd was not cool, because after all the lead parts were assigned (like Mary and Joseph) and all the speaking parts were decided (like the Innkeeper and the Angel Gabriel), then everybody else was invited to be a shepherd. Pastor Judy assured us, "There are no small parts in the Christmas story."

The cool thing about the shepherds is that they are the first people outside the stable to hear about God's amazing miracle: "A Savior is born today in David's city!" Just as in the Christmas story, there are no small parts in life. God invites us all into the story of faith and calls each of us to play a special part.

Pray: God of all good things, thank you for the extraordinary love you offer to ordinary people. Thank you for the gift of Jesus. Thank you for the gift of Christmas. Thank you for giving me a special part in your big story. Amen.

Do: Light is a symbol we use at Christmas. Find your white luminary bag in your Advent bag. Decorate it as creatively as you wish to represent being the light of Christ. Consider using stencils to cut shapes or designs. A quick Google search should give you plenty of ideas if you need help getting started. You may also choose to write on the bag the name of a loved one who represents the light of Christ to you; or the name of someone who has gone on to be with Jesus in heaven. Deliver your luminary bag to the church office by 3:00PM on December 22nd. The church will provide a battery operated candle for each bag. We will use the bags to line the front of our church sanctuary steps for our worship services on December 23rd and 24th.





*We Need
a Little Christmas*



Children's Section

What do you think of when you think about the Christmas season? Do you rush out the first moment you can and find the perfect Christmas tree? Do you pull loads of boxes out of the attic with excitement to find your special ornaments inside? Do you make lists of all the things you love and make a wish list? Do you find the manger scene and put it in a special place? How about an Advent wreath? Is there one on a special table, where you light a new candle each week leading up to Christmas day? Christmas Carols on the radio, lights strung on the homes of your friends and neighbors and our own downtown filled with lights and fun activities are waiting for us each year! Christmas is a special time to get excited about family, friends and fellowship. As Christians, Advent is the special time leading up to Christmas where we remind ourselves of the Hope, Love, Joy and Peace that Christ brings us.

To help us celebrate those wonderful feelings, we are going to be completing some special activities as families here at Oakland. In this Advent bag, you will find various activities to do each week leading up to Christmas. We ask that you please follow the directions for each activity on the week/day listed. We will be completing the activities together but in our own homes, so that we can, as families, have a focus on the Spirit of the season.

Merry Christmas!
Mrs. Kim



Advent Kickoff Party

November 29, 4PM-5PM

OBC Parking Lot

Pre-packaged snacks, socially distant crafts and games

We need a little Kindness

In your bag are all the components of this special activity. The activity consists of a nativity ornament and paper chain with daily activities, which you may detach and complete each day leading towards Christmas. The ornament may hang on your tree, a doorway or any special place where you can see it and remember the activity and love you feel while completing each activity.

Please note: if you are making multiple chains in your family, make sure your activities match the order of the others in your house.

Step 1:

Using the Wooden Nativity pack, color each part of the nativity with markers or paint and glue the nativity together on the wooden backing. Using glue, attach the twine hanger.

Step 2:

Using a glue stick, attach each white activity strip to a colored paper strip.

Step 3:

Using tape or a stapler, starting with the first link by bending the paper into a circle to create the first link for your chain. Staple the circle. Loop the second paper strip through the first link and staple the circle...repeat for each strip until you have made the chain. **this is where the order of the activities for your family chain should match up if multiple siblings are making chains together!

Step 4:

Attach the first link to the back of the nativity ornament and allow the chain to hang down.

Step 5:

Each day beginning December 1, detach a link and complete the activity for that day.



Step 6:

I would love to have a picture of you completing the activity, to share with our Children's ministry as encouragement for others to share love with those around them this wonderful season!

Have fun!! Show me your completed links (kshaw@oaklandchurch.com), and I'll be sharing mine as well!!

We need a little Nativity

Inside your Advent bag are coloring pages to create a Nativity scene. This scene was created by artist Joel Henriques (madebyjoel.com). Do not color all the characters at one time! Follow the instructions for each week to learn each character's story and how each one should be completed.

We need a little Advent Wreath

Unlike a traditional Advent Wreath, this wreath is personal and child palm-sized—just right for a bedside table or desk. While parental supervision is needed for lighting the candles, creating this wreath should be unique to each child. All elements of this wreath kit can be found in your Advent Bag.



Materials needed:

- Foam square to use as the base of the wreath
- 1 white tea-light candle to serve as the center Christ Candle
- 4 blue birthday candles to serve as the Advent Candles
- Green Play-Doh to wrap around the tea-light Christ Candle
- Glitter to add a touch of joyous whimsy to the green Play-Doh
- Prayer scroll containing child-friendly prayers to recite when lighting each candle

We need a little Hope

Week of November 29

Talking about Hope

Materials needed:

- Magic Rainbow scratch off ornament
- Sharp scratch off stick

Fill in the blank for this sentence: "I hope I get _____ for Christmas."

Does hoping for something mean you definitely get it? Often we use the word hope to mean the same thing as a wish—like with our answer about Christmas. In the Bible the word hope is used differently. The hope we receive from God is not just a happy wish. The hope God gives is always real, always true. We can trust that God will keep God's promises.

Of course, it is sometimes hard to place your hope in someone you can't see. It is hard for us to remember that God is always with us because we can't see God or touch God. Using your scratch off stick, write the word "HOPE" on your scratch off ornament. What happened to the paper? Did you see something that wasn't there before?

At Christmas we celebrate that God is with us, even through our darkest moments. At first your ornament was dark and void of color, but after you wrote the word "HOPE" did you notice the bright, colorful background that shined through?

Read Romans 15:4 and Psalm 147:10-11. According to these verses, where can we find hope? What makes God happy? Often as we prepare for Christmas, our hope is in presents or stuff we might receive. During this Advent season, let's work on placing our hope in God's faithful love instead of stuff.

Finish coloring all of your ornament and then hang it on your tree as a reminder that the light of Christ shines through the darkness.



Learning about Hope

Read: Zechariah, the priest, and his wife, Elizabeth were faithful followers of God. They had been married for many years but did not have any children. When it was Zechariah's turn to serve God in the temple, an angel appeared to him. Zechariah was very afraid. Luke 1:13-17 tells us what happens next: "But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will have a child. It will be a boy, and you must name him John. He will be a joy and delight to you...He will bring many of Israel's people back to the Lord their God. And he will prepare the way for the Lord.'" Zechariah wondered how this could possibly happen because he and his wife were so old. The angel said to Zechariah, "I am Gabriel. I serve God. I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news."

Ask: What hope was delivered in the angel's words? How do you think Zechariah and Elizabeth felt in hearing the angel's words?

Do: Find the angel Gabriel and Zechariah in your bag and color them. How could you make Zechariah look old? Cut the figures out and display them somewhere in your house.

Let us hear Mary's story next

Read: Mary lived in Nazareth, a small village located far from Jerusalem. She was young and was engaged to marry Joseph, a carpenter. "One day the angel Gabriel came to her and said, 'The Lord has given you special favor. He is with you'" (Luke 1:28). Mary was confused. What could the angel mean? While Mary was wondering about this, the angel continued, "Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God" (Luke 1:30-32). Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen?" Gabriel told her that God's Spirit makes anything possible. The angel also told Mary about her relative Elizabeth who was six months pregnant even though she was old. Mary said, "I serve the Lord. May it happen to me just as you said it would" (Luke. 1:38). Then the angel left her. Mary hurried to visit her relative Elizabeth.

Ask: Like Zechariah, Mary received a message from God through Gabriel. How do you think Mary felt in the presence of the angel? How do you think you would feel? What was Mary's answer to Gabriel? While we might not understand some of the events in our lives, do you trust that God will be with you? Why do you think God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother? Mary hurried to visit her cousin Elizabeth. The journey from Nazareth to Hebron is about 80 miles in a direct line which means a bit longer when you have to follow a roundabout path. Her trip would have taken 3-5 days. What do you think Mary was thinking about while she traveled?

Do: Find Mary in your bag and color her. In what ways could you make her look young? Cut Mary out and display her speaking to the angel Gabriel.

We need a little Peace

Week of December 6

Talking about Peace

Materials needed:

Water beads (3/4 of the beads in your Advent Bag)

Balloon

Empty plastic water bottle

What does it mean to have peace? What makes you lose your peace? Do you lose your peace when you are facing a big test at school? When someone says something unkind to you? When you are scared? When you are angry at someone? Read John 14:27. Jesus wants to give us his peace!



Our activity for this week is to make a homemade stress ball. Fill an empty bottle with the 3/4 of the water beads found in your Advent bag. (Keep the remaining quarter water beads for the activity during the week of Joy.) Fill half the bottle with water. Find the balloon in your Advent bag and blow up the balloon about halfway. Stretch the opening of the balloon over the water bottle (tip: put as much of the opening of the balloon over the top of the water bottle as possible) Turn over the water bottle and pour the water and water beads into the balloon. Squeeze the water bottle to help the beads out if necessary. Let the air out of the balloon and tie a knot. Allow 24 hours for the water beads to absorb the water inside the balloon. For a creative option—use a sharpie to decorate your stress ball with symbols of peace

For the remainder of Advent, whenever you feel like you are losing your peace, squeeze your stress ball and take a deep breath. While breathing in pray “Give me” and while breathing out pray “Your peace.” Repeat as often as needed.

Learning about Peace

Read: When Mary entered Elizabeth's home, Elizabeth ran excitedly to greet her. Scripture tells us: "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby inside her jumped. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she called out, 'God has blessed you more than other women. And blessed is the child you will have! ... As soon as I heard the sound of your voice, the baby inside me jumped for joy. You are a woman God has blessed. You have believed that what the Lord has said to you will be done!'" (Luke 1:41-45). Mary prayed aloud, "My soul gives glory to the Lord. My spirit delights in God my Savior. He has taken note of me even though I am not important. From now on all people will call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me. His name is holy" (Luke 1:46-49). Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then returned home to Nazareth.

Ask: How do you think Mary felt when she heard Elizabeth's greeting? Mary's prayer is a very famous section of the Bible often called the Magnificat or Song of Mary. Many people have put Mary's words to music. How did Mary's prayer show her peace with her situation? Could you make up a song about the great things God has done in your life? Elizabeth and Mary spent three months together. The Bible doesn't give us the details, but it does tell us the time. Why do you think this time was important to the women, one older and one much younger? Are there people in your life right now that you might benefit from spending time with? Are there people who might benefit from spending time with you?

Do: Find Elizabeth in your bag and color her. In what ways could you make her look much older than Mary? Cut Elizabeth out and display her speaking with Mary.

Let's hear Joseph's story next

Read: Joseph was engaged to be married to Mary, but before they started living together as husband and wife, it became clear that Mary was going to have a baby. Mary had become pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph was a Godly man. He did not want people to say awful things about Mary, so Joseph decided to divorce her quietly. While Joseph slept, an angel

appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That is because he will save his people from their sins"(Matthew 1:20-21). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel commanded him to do and took Mary home as his wife.

Ask: How do you think Joseph was feeling before his dream? How do you think Joseph felt after his dream? Do you think it was easy for Joseph to obey the angel's command? Why or why not? Do you think obeying God gave Joseph peace? There are not many facts recorded about Joseph in the Bible. He is mentioned only related to the events surrounding Jesus' birth, flight to Egypt, return to Galilee. Joseph obeyed the Lord without question during this time and he was blessed by God. God had an amazing plan for Joseph's life! Do you find it easy to obey without questioning? Like with Joseph, what amazing plan might God have for your life?

Do: Find Joseph in your bag and color him. Cut Joseph out and display him speaking with the angel.



We need a little Love

Week of December 13

Talking about Love

Materials needed:

Paper towel

Black ink Pen

Red marker

Small cup filled with water



Draw a heart towards the bottom of the paper towel. Have you ever felt lonely, like your heart was empty? After discussing this question color in the heart with a red marker. This is what happens when we invite Jesus to be in our life. He fills our heart with his love. How can we show this love to others?

Draw some hearts above the first heart. Discuss how there are other hearts in the world in need of love. God wants us to share love with other people, especially those who feel lonely. Slowly place the bottom of the paper towel in the water and watch, as the water is absorbed, the red marker shifting up to the other hearts, filling them.

The great news that we celebrate at Christmas is that God came to the world in the form of Jesus to teach us about love. Read Romans 5:5. God wants to fill us with God's love; and to God also wants us to share God's love. What are some ways you can share God's love with others?

Learning about Love

Read: During the time right before Jesus' birth, the emperor Caesar Augustus ruled over many people. Emperor Augustus decided that he wanted a list (a census) of everyone who lived in the whole Roman world. To accomplish this, he made a law that ordered everyone to go to the towns where their ancestors had lived in order to be counted. "So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby" (Luke 2:4-5).

Ask: The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem is nearly 100 miles. Bible scholars say this would have been a grueling trip lasting 5 to 10 days. Google Maps says it takes 33 hours to walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Pictures often portray Mary making this journey riding on a donkey, but there is no mention of a donkey in the Bible. Now imagine you are Mary or Joseph - what are you thinking about as you travel to Bethlehem while you waiting for your baby to arrive any day? Would you be excited to be making the trip at this time or maybe worried about being so far from home and family? Do you think Mary or Joseph were wondering if God was with them on this journey? Do you wonder if God is with you on your journey? Mary and Joseph loved each other very much and God's love was a part of their lives. How do you think they felt God's love during their journey?

Do: Color the stable scene and any animals that you want to add. Get it ready for Mary and Joseph's arrival.

Lets hear about the manger and baby Jesus next

Read: While Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem to be counted, the time came for the baby to be born. "Mary gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. There was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

Ask: In what kind of places do you think that really important people like kings and queens are born? The angel had told Mary that she was giving birth to the "Son of the Most High God" yet Jesus' first bed was a manger! A manger is a wooden or stone feeding trough or food box that holds hay for larger farm animals like cattle, horses and donkeys - a place where animals would come to eat. Do you think this was poor planning on God's part or a mistake? Why do you think God decided that Jesus was to be born into such circumstances? Why do you think Jesus wasn't born in a palace or somewhere more suitable for a future king and the son of the Most High God?

Do: Color the manger and baby Jesus. Set up your stable scene with Mary, Joseph, the manger, baby Jesus and whatever animals you want in your stable.

We need a little Joy

Week of December 20

Talking about Joy

Materials needed:

Water beads

Water

Bowl

Pot

Stove

Begin by filling a bowl with water. Add the rest of your water beads from your Advent bag into the bowl. Wait 24 hours. Waiting is hard, but sometimes we have to wait for joy to come!

After 24 hours, with adult supervision, heat a pot on high heat on the stovetop. Take 4 or 5 water beads and drop them in the pot. If your pot is the right temperature you will see the water beads jump and hear them scream! After a minute, dump the water beads out of your pot and add new water beads. Repeat the fun as many times as you like! How cool is it that our water beads are jumping for joy?

What is it that makes you jump for joy like the water beads? What do you think makes God jump for joy? If we left the water beads in the pan too long, they would lose their joy and stop jumping. What makes you lose your joy? What do you think makes God lose God's joy? Read together John 15:9-12. What kind of joy does Jesus want us to have according to these verses? Does Jesus tell us how to have the same kind of joy that he has?

How can you give joy to someone this week? Make a list and plan to carry out one or two of your ideas.

Learning about Joy

Read: Nearby where Jesus was born, there were shepherds living out in the fields. It was night and they were looking after their sheep. Shepherds at the time would have smelled like sheep, slept on the ground and had very little money. They were not considered important people but yet: "An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. It is for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger." Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said, "May glory be given to God in the highest heaven! And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!" (Luke 2:9-14). The angels went back to heaven and the shepherds hurried off to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph and the baby. The baby was lying in the manger.

Ask: Why do you think God chose shepherds to be the first people to hear about Jesus birth? Imagine what a large group of angels would look like suddenly appearing on a starry night. What would you have done? How would you have felt, do you think? What is the "great joy for all the people" the angels were talking about?

Do: Find the shepherds and sheep in your bag and color them. Add them all to your stable scene.

Go ahead and read the next section "We Need a Little Christ(mas) in preparation for Christmas Eve/Day. The activity for this section needs to be completed before December 22nd.



We need a little Christmas

December 24/25

Talking about Christmas

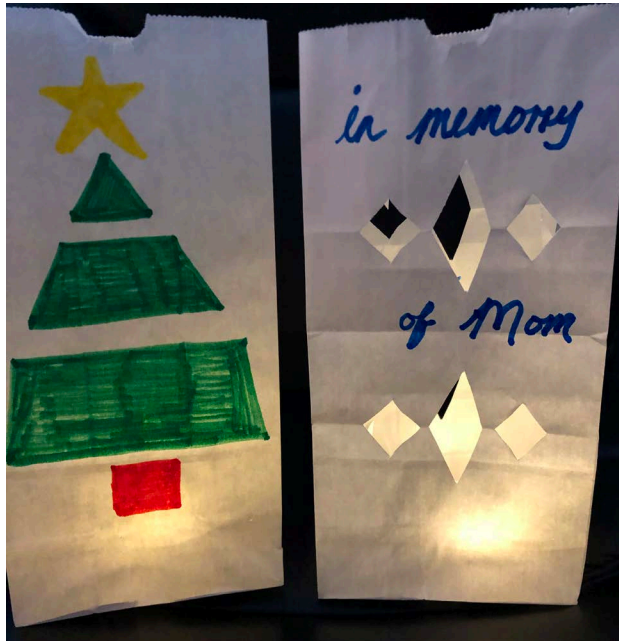
Materials needed:

Luminary bag

Scissors

Stencils

Crayons/Markers



Read Luke 2:32. Jesus is only eight days old when Simeon describes baby Jesus as a light. What does Simeon say is the purpose of the light? Jesus is going to reveal God's glory! Later in Jesus' life he tells us more. Read John 8:12. What does Jesus say is the purpose of the light? Now read Matthew 5:14-16. Who is the light now? Jesus says that we are the light of the world.

Light is a symbol we use at Christmas. Find your white luminary bag in your Advent bag. Decorate it as creatively as you wish to represent being the light of Christ. Consider using stencils to cut shapes or designs. A quick Google search should give you plenty of ideas if you need help getting started. Deliver your luminary bag to the church office by 3:00PM on December 22nd. The church will provide a battery operated candle for each bag. We will use the bags to line the front of our church sanctuary steps for our worship services on December 23rd and 24th.

Learning about Christmas

Read: Scripture tells us that "Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea. This happened while Herod was king of Judea. Approximately two years after Jesus' birth, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, 'Where is the child who has been born to be king of the Jews? When we were in the east, we saw his star. Now we have come to worship him'" (Matthew 2:1-2). King Herod did not want anyone else in his land claiming to be king. He asked the religious leaders where they thought the promised king would be born. They told him Bethlehem. Herod asked the Wise Men to go and search for the child and when they found him to report back to Herod so that he could also go and worship. "The star they had seen when they were in the east went ahead of them. It finally stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. The Wise Men went to the house. There they saw the child with his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures. They gave him gold, incense and myrrh" (Matthew 2:9-11). God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod (who wanted to harm baby Jesus) so they returned home on a different road.


Ask: What do you think it would be like to take a very long trip with only a star to guide you? What problems might you face on the trip? The wise men brought Jesus the best gifts they could think of - gifts fit for a king! Do you believe these gifts brought joy to Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus? What are the best gifts that you can give to Jesus?


Do: Find the wise men and camel in your bag and color them. Set them up moving toward the stable. We don't celebrate the wise men giving their gifts to Jesus until Epiphany which is celebrated on January 6 so have your wise men get a little closer to Jesus each day! Use the blank strips to draw yourself holding a gift that you would like to give to Jesus. Write your name on the blank line. Now add yourself to the nativity scene!



OAKLAND BAPTIST CHURCH

the presence of Christ at the crossroads of life

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