

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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FOR YOU . . .
FOR YOUR FAMILY . . .
FOR USE DURING . . .

ADVENT

This booklet is an attempt on the part of our church to offer suggestions for a rich and meaningful ADVENT SEASON. Advent is designed as a period of preparation for Christmas. There are five worship service suggestions in this booklet . . . one for each of the 4 Sundays of Advent (December 2, 9, 16, 23), and for Christmas Day.

We suggest you have an Advent wreath . . . You'll need five candles and a bit of decoration. Use one candle as a Christ candle, the other four as symbols of the Sundays of Advent. Center the Christ candle amid the candles, put a little greenery with them and you've got an Advent wreath. Be as elaborate or as simple as you wish.

If you want to follow through with color symbolism, then use a white candle for the Christ candle and purple (or red) candles for the other four.

Let everyone participate in the devotionals and other activities. Adapt these suggestions to fit your own situation.

These services have been adapted from ones by David James Randolph, and printed by TIDINGS.

Have a fun, joyful and meaningful Advent. If you do you'll surely not miss Christ at Christmas. These pages may help you.

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, Denison, Ia

We Have seen
this star in the east
and have come to
worship HIM.

THE WISE

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT (December 2)

Music: An old song, "As With Gladness Men of Old"
A new song, "The Age of Aquarius" as recorded
by the Fifth Dimension and others

Scripture: To be read aloud, Matthew 2:1,2

Meditation: Advent comes as an invitation "to journey even unto Bethlehem to see this thing which is come to pass." The first travelers whom we see as we set out on this trip to truth are the Wise Men. They are looking for the dawn of a new age, like that of Aquarius. The star of love steers them to Jesus Christ and the dawning of the age of Jesus Christ. This Jesus will put an end to magic by uncovering the power within men to shape their own future. This is the mind's "true liberation".

We journey with the Wise Men when we seek the meaning of life. But like them, we must travel all the way to Bethlehem itself. To make the trip is to discover that all our life is a journey from the place we were born to the place where Jesus Christ is born in us.

Lighting of the Candle

Prayer: Dear God, this Advent teach us your truth. Forgive us for all the times we have stopped in the suburbs of your Kingdom and fallen short of your Will. Lead us past the quick conclusions and the half truths to the heart of life itself: the love you have for us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

STUDY SECTION

Advent, the first season of the Church Year, is a period of penitence in preparation for the coming of the King. The liturgical color for Advent is purple.

Read Genesis 3, verses 1-13 and Matthew 2, verses 1-12. Genesis suggests that the beginning of wisdom was not especially favorable. However, the passage from Matthew indicates that wise men can follow their wisdom to Christ. Can people be too wise for their own good? What do you think of the limits of wisdom?

OUTREACH

Decorating the Christmas tree can be one of the joys of the Christmas season. Make decorations and trimmings from wrappings and ribbons, and so on that might otherwise be thrown away.

FAMILY FUN

The lighting of the candles and the worship will be more fun as more people participate in them. The pattern suggested here ought to be adapted to your family so that as many as possible can take part. Members of the family may take turns lighting the candles and doing the different parts of the service from week to week.

Young members of the family may enjoy selecting popular records which pick up old themes in new ways. Someone will need to see that the candles are set in place and that the means of lighting them are handy, etc.

Light one candle today, two next Sunday and so on until they are all lighted on Christmas Day.



THE WORKERS

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

(Dec. 9)

Music: An old song, "Go Tell It on the Mountain".

A new song, "Ballad of Forty Dollars" as recorded by Tom Hall.

Scripture: to be read aloud, Luke 2, verses 8, 9, 15 and 20.

Meditation: The angels appeared to the shepherds when they would have least

expected them, in the midst of their work. We may prefer God to visit us at a convenient hour, only when we are in church perhaps. But God does not stand on ceremony and is apt to drop in anytime.

It is clear from this account that faith for the wise is a faith for workers. More than this, the faith of the wise is a faith that works. Christian faith functions in the field as well as in the forum. God is always equally near us, and is ready anytime to give his power to us.

Lighting the candle

Prayer: Dear God, you helped the shepherds see their work with new eyes and we ask that we may also. Help us to see the constructive possibilities in our work and in the persons with whom we work. May what we do in our work and in our leisure glorify and praise you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

STUDY SECTION

Advent probably grows out of the early Christian practice of preparing candidates to be received into the fellowship of the church. There are always four Sundays in Advent.

Read Isaiah 9:6. The title "Prince of Peace" is naturally given to Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment of this prophecy. Luke 2:14 is an explicit reference to peace associated with Christ's Birth.

What does it mean to you to call Christ the "King of Peace"?

OUTREACH

Make or prepare Christmas gifts - they need not be elaborate - for someone you work with or for your school teacher. Perhaps, it could be something which would add a Christmas touch to the office or the class room.

Since Christmas is about peace, perhaps you could attempt to restore a friendship which has been broken or which has faded.

FAMILY FUN

Today our theme has been work and peace. We might take extra time today to help with the meal and other work around the house. If you don't think this is family fun, just ask mother.



THE WEARY

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT (December 16)

Music: An old song, "O Come All Ye Faithful"
A new song, "Crossroads" by Don McLean

Scripture: To be read aloud, Luke 2:1-3

Meditation: There are many travelers on the road to Bethlehem beside those whom we see clearly. They have great importance because they confront us in our wandering and ask, where are you going?

Man, the wanderer, has crossed streams, rivers, oceans, and now outer space itself. When Neil Armstrong took the step from the ladder which placed his foot upon the moon it was a giant step for mankind.

Nevertheless, social distances are harder to bridge than sheer space itself. When astronauts blasted off for a moon orbit around Christmas 1968, a Sioux Indian in the Dakotas watched with intense interest. To his daughter he humerously confided, "If only my grandfather could have seen this. White man come. White man go". Will the moon be the ultimate reservation for minority groups? Or the space in which symbolically at least men learn to live with each other without reservations?

The Lighting of the Candle:

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the achievements of man. Thank you for the giant step you made toward us in Jesus of Nazareth. Forgive us for our selfishness, our meanness, our sin. Help us to make giant steps toward peace, justice, and reconciliation, lest our wandering lead us not to you but toward a larger lunacy. We pray through Jesus Christ. Amen.

STUDY SECTION

The length of Advent varies from 22 to 28 days, and ends on Christmas Eve.

Read from First Chronicles, chapter 29, verses 10-18, especially 14-18. Compare with Luke 2:1-3. What response did David make to his condition of wandering as reported in Chronicles? How may we make similar response today?

OUTREACH

There are still many wanderers on American roads today. There are some three million "doorstep children" - that is, young people who are away from home who would not have anyone to sign papers for them if it were legally necessary. Thousands of adults are in a similar situation.

Find an agency in your community which deals with these wanderers and see what you can do to help.

FAMILY FUN

Wandering can also be a lot of fun. Think of the family trips you have taken and enjoyed. Think about the travel you will be doing this coming year - if there is any gasoline. Plan ways in which your leisure time can be more fruitful for you.



THE WEARY

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT (December 23)

Music: An old song, "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"
A new song, "Vincent" as sung by Don McLean
or "Ol' Man River"

Scripture: To be read aloud, Luke 2:7

Meditation: We find the weary on the road to Bethlehem. The inevitable, "just before Christmas" weariness helps us to understand the first Christmas. The fatigue we feel walking from store to store and carrying parcels must be something like the fatigue Mary and Joseph felt after their journey by foot and donkey.

We will continue to feel this weariness as long as we only go to this store and that shopping center. Come to me, Jesus said, and I will give you rest.

Lighting of the Candle:

Prayer: Dear God, help us to travel with you. We are heartily sorry and repent for all the times we've gone on without you. We realize now that we have not made much progress. Help us to travel with you all the way, may the joy of this journey make the burden light. We praise you for the gift of Jesus Christ, in whom the wise may find the fulfillment of their intellects, from whom the workers may return praising God, to whom the wanderers may come, and in whose will the weary find rest. In His name. Amen.

STUDY SECTION

Advent means coming in three basic senses:

- a. The coming of Christ in the flesh commemorated at Christmas.
- b. The coming of Christ in Spirit and in Word, as represented throughout the Church year.
- c. The coming of Christ at the end of time in Glory.

Read Isaiah 5, verses 24-30

The prophet imagines a day when no one is weary, a day of judgement. Do you believe that that "day" has come in Jesus? Or is that day of judgement to appear when He comes again? Compare Luke 2:4-7.

OUTREACH

If you have received a number of Christmas cards, think of those in homes and institutions who have not. Those who send you cards will surely not mind if you pass them on to lonely people. Or you might make cards for them, or you might make some kind of simple Christmas favors.

FAMILY FUN

Make posters with water colors or crayons which express the meaning of Christmas for you. Think of them as a Christmas card to the whole world. Put them up in your home or at school or where you work or play.



THE ANSWERER

CHRISTMAS DAY

Music: An old song, "Joy to the World"
A new song, "Who Will Answer" as sung by Ed Ames.

Scripture: To be read aloud, Isaiah 53:1-6 and II Corinthians 5:15-21

Meditation: LIFE ? ? ? Not one question but many . . .
WHO ? WHAT ? WHEN ?

Christmas means that God has come up underneath the questions (Like a root out of dry ground, as Isaiah put it) to offer a basis for life, to support it with meaning, to open a future. Christmas means that God doesn't give an answer . . . a neat, precise, formula.

He gives an answerer, a person, full of pain, and hope, and Himself, named Jesus

Knowing him, we know something bigger than the answers. Bigger even than the questions. This gift is yours at Christmas. Be sure to pick it up at your nearest heart.

Prayer: Our Father, we thank you for all the gifts we have received this day. But we thank you most for the gift of your son, Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May our lives become a gift to the world even as you have become a gift to us in Jesus Christ our Lord, whose birthday we celebrate today. Amen.

STUDY SECTION

December 25 is, of course, Christmas Day. Like Easter it is preceded by a time of penitence and preparation. White is the liturgical color for Christmas.

Read Exodus 5:1-8

Making a journey of faith is an ancient custom rooted in the liberation experience of the children of Israel. Ponder the implication of this story of Moses and the Pharaoh as we seek to liberate ourselves from the various forces which hold dominion over us today.

OUT REACH

A New Year's Revolution

This year instead of making New Year's resolutions, why not commit yourself to a New Year's revolution? Let us commit ourselves to Christ and pledge ourselves to change the world in his name in the year to come.

Look sensitively at the world around you. Where are the points of need? What are your resources? How can you help? Through study programs at church, home, church, find ways in which you can contribute to the solution of the major problems facing the world today.

Urge organizations you belong to to take some positive action.

FAMILY FUN

If your family has not already done so, prepare a manger scene. Let each member bring something meaningful to him. It may be a doll, a special toy, a gift of money, etc. Make these an offering to Christ and have a time of prayer and commitment.