

Leader's Guide for
CELEBRATING THE SEASONS OF ADVENT AND LENT
Advent

Advent begins a new Church year and is a season of preparation and anticipation for Christmas. The word *Advent* means “coming” and marks three comings of Jesus: his coming at his birth, his coming to us each day and his coming at the end of time. This season of Advent invites us to change and grow more like Jesus.

In the framework of the lighting of the four candles of the Advent Wreath, the candles of waiting, kindness, joy, peace, this video tells the story of a people yesterday and today who yearn for more light in their life and explores different customs, traditions, activities, prayers and reflections from young people on the spirit of the Advent season.

The themes of this Advent video are reflected in the prayer that is said for each candle: “In the light of this Advent Wreath, we remember, live and hope for the one who has already come. We warm our hearts to live justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with God.”

1. When do we celebrate Advent? With whom did you identify in the video when they talked about their feelings of a long night of darkness? How can lighting the candles of the Advent Wreath help us get ready for Christmas? What does the word *Advent* mean? Reflect on one way that Jesus comes to you now. Write the name of an attitude that helps you recognize Christ's presence. Choose an activity you will do to put that attitude into practice.
2. How does your family get ready for Christmas? To ready your heart for Jesus, make signs for your classroom and home: “Be Alert,” “Stay Awake,” “Listen.” Talk about the colors of Advent that speak of our desire and longing. Make an Advent Wreath. Each week as you light a candle, engage in some of the following projects and discussions for the candles of waiting, kindness, joy, peace. Write a prayer on the theme of each of these candles for the prayer service.

CANDLE OF WAITING

- What and where is your waiting place? How do you wait? How does waiting for Christmas help you to grow?
- Write a blessing for your Christmas tree. Design and make a memorial ornament that honors someone you want to remember. Plan to place it on your Christmas tree.
- Make a Jesse Tree. Each week draw and display symbols for different people in Jesus' family tree who lived and dreamed of peace and justice throughout the land.
- Tell the story of Noah, Abraham & Sarah, Jacob & Rachel. Place a sign for each on Jesse Tree.
- Recall people in your life today who wait in hope. Say a prayer of gratitude for them.

CANDLE OF KINDNESS

- Has anyone been a kind light to you? How can you be a light to others by doing acts of loving-kindness?
- Consider doing the Advent custom of “straw for a crib.” For every kind act done during the day, place a piece of straw in the crib.
- Tell the story of these people who prepared a place in their heart for God: Joseph, Moses & Miriam, Ruth. Make a sign for each and place on Jesse Tree.
- Name and say a prayer of thanksgiving for people in your life today who offer the light of kindness to others.

CANDLE OF JOY

- Where is there joy in your life? What is the feeling of joy? How do you share joy?
- Make an Advent Calendar. For each day place a way and promise for helping others. Brainstorm with a group before making your choices.
- For counting the days of Advent with joy, make or buy an Advent House which makes suggestions behind each window and door for ways to remember and prepare for Christmas.
- Decorate a candle for Mary. Write a prayer of joy.
- Look up the story of David, Solomon and Isaiah in Scripture. You may want to discover and add more prophets. Draw a symbol for each figure and place on your Jesse Tree.
- Recall people in your own life who offer the light of joy to others and pray for them.

CANDLE OF PEACE

What is peace for you? How do you treat the poor justly and care for the world in which we live? Think of ways your hands can bring justice and make a more peaceful world. How can your hands be a blessing of peace?

Talk about the Mexican custom of Las Posadas as well as other customs from other cultures. Recall the stories of Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Mary. Draw symbols for each and add to Jesse Tree.

Name and say a prayer of gratitude for people in your life today who still wait in peace.

3. PRAYER SERVICE

Materials Needed: Advent Wreath, matches, written prayers for each theme (candles of waiting, kindness, joy, peace from #2), Bible.

WE GATHER

Lord, Jesus, you are coming. We prepare and stay awake to welcome you. Bring peace and justice. We bow in reverence to all creation, your earth and your people. Give us light to see your presence and hands to heal a weary world.

WE LISTEN

A reading from the book of Jeremiah 33:14-16.

WE RESPOND

We light the candles of the Advent Wreath. (As each candle is lit, a theme prayer is read.)

WE SEND

We warm our hands by the light of this wreath. (Pause)

In the light of this Advent wreath, we remember, live and hope for the one who has already come. We warm our hearts to live justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with God. We extend our hands in a blessing of light for all people. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader's Guide written by: Gaynell Cronin

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NOTE: This guide can be printed and cut down in size to be stored with the DVD version of this video program. Simply cut $\frac{3}{4}$ inch from each side of the page for a guide that, when folded, can be placed inside of the DVD case or attached to the DVD or VHS case.

For use with: *Advent: Celebrating the Season* on VHS (K250A) and DVD (D2500)

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Leader's Guide for
CELEBRATING THE SEASONS OF ADVENT AND LENT
Lent

We begin our journey through the season of Lent in this video by being marked with ashes in the Sign of the Cross on our forehead with these words: *"Keep Lent and turn to God with all your heart."* These words become the thread throughout the video, challenging us to follow Jesus more closely through prayer, fasting, doing good works and remembering. This guide invites us to consider customs, traditions and ways to keep Lent as we walk together on the path to Jerusalem, preparing for the new life of Easter.

1. Lent is a time to walk together. Describe where you are on your faith path. Whose footprints guide you? What can you do to make the journey meaningful for yourself and others?
2. What are your family Lenten traditions? With whom would you identify in the video as a way to keep Lent for yourself? Invite each person to write a promise of what he or she will do during Lent on a small piece of paper and place in a container. (These will be used in prayer service.)
3. Lent is a conversion time. What do you want to change about yourself? Why? Who helps you to change your heart? Whom have you helped? Make a Lenten calendar and chart your conversion during Lent. Mark where you go, what you do, with whom you spend time and other experiences as you turn toward God in Christ.
4. Lent is a special time for prayer. As Jesus went to the desert to pray, where do you go when you want to be alone? Consider doing one of these prayer activities:
 - Plan to make the Stations of the Cross a walking prayer. Have group members choose one station, a symbol depicting that experience and write their reflection. Display symbols in a pattern and invite them to speak their reflection as they move to each station.
 - Write a Lenten prayer to become more caring.
 - Dim the lights. Quiet yourself. Pray the Our Father slowly, pausing between phrases. Imagine Jesus is teaching the words of the prayer to you.
 - Make a prayer chain. Each time you say a prayer for someone add a link.
 - Write a prayer and note of encouragement to people in the RCIA preparing to join the Church at Easter.
 - Make a Lenten Grab Bag which holds different Scripture quotes for choosing and praying.

- Buy pretzels. Recall them as arms crossed in prayer. Pause to pray before eating.
5. During Lent we are called to fast.
 - Consider a way to limit the quantity of food you eat. What suggestion do you recall from the video?
 - From what old habit would you like to fast? Talk about good habits you want to develop. In the video what person's response do you remember?
 - Like the widow in the Gospel, make a mite box and put aside spending money for the poor.
 - Plan to spring clean your desk, room, closets, home. Choose to discard, fix or refurbish useless and useful things. Give your life a house cleaning.
 6. We keep Lent by doing good works.
 - What are some ways you can serve by doing acts of loving kindness? Recall what you heard and saw in the video. With group, brainstorm things to do.
 - How could you choose to live as a peacemaker? Name and list situations that are unjust or unfair. Sit with a partner and decide a way to solve peacefully one of these situations.
 7. Through remembering we turn to God with all our hearts.
 - Plan a memorial to Jesus. Have group members choose and write about a person from Scripture who experienced Jesus. Choose a symbol to represent that person. After each reflection is read, stand before a cross, bow, place symbol there and say: "We adore you, O Lord, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."
 - Ask: What is your remembrance of Jesus? How would you speak of Jesus? How do you need Jesus in your life right now? On paper, draw or write a sign or words for the way you remember Jesus. Share.
 8. Lent is a turning time.
 - Make a cross with twigs and purple yarn and place in your room. Though not made of wood, each of us has a cross of suffering that makes life difficult. Renew your decision to follow Jesus even when it is hard to do. Read Luke 23:44-47. (Plan to use this cross for the prayer service.)
 - Think of one wrongdoing or weakness for which you are in need of forgiveness. Go and bow before a cross. Touch the cross and mentally place your wrongdoing there.
 - Make and eat hot cross buns as reminders that we are bound to one another through the cross of Jesus. As you eat this bread, pledge your willingness to help carry the burdens of others like Jesus.
 9. Make banners of joy. Plan to bury them in a basement or a closet. Prepare to decorate your home with them on Easter. Talk about the movement of Holy Week.

10. PRAYER SERVICE

Materials needed: a cross (from #8), a container for burning promises, folded promise papers (see #2), pretzels (see #4.)

WE GATHER

We stand and bow before our Lenten cross. Lent is the time to pay attention to God in our life through prayer, penance and doing acts of loving-kindness to others. We make the Sign of the Cross.

WE LISTEN

A reading from the book of Joel 2:12-13.

WE RESPOND

Take a moment to recall the way you have chosen to turn to God with all your heart. (Pause) As you are called by name, please come forward and place your folded promise paper in the container in front of the cross. (Pause)

We light these offerings. As we watch them burn, we deepen our Lenten promises in our heart. As the smoke lifts, so do our spirits in knowing that we can do all things in Jesus who lives in us and among us.

We extend our hands over the ashes in blessing:

Lord, bless these ashes. May they be a sign that we have turned to you with all our hearts. Pardon our wrongdoings, Keep us faithful to our Lenten promises.

Leader marks the forehead of each person with ashes while saying: "Keep Lent and turn to God with all your heart."

WE SEND

We bow our heads for God's blessing. Our response will be "Amen."

Come back to the Lord with all your heart...Amen.

Leave the past in ashes. Turn to God with prayers and good works...Amen.

For God is tender and compassionate...Amen.

Let us go forth to love and serve the Lord through the way we live our Lenten promises. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...Amen.

(Eat pretzels.)

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