



St. James' Children, Youth & Family Ministry  
Mo Allyn, Director

## Advent: A Season of Hope and Preparation



*Dear Families of St. James'!*

*The season of Advent brings so much joy as well as days full of tasks. At times, the joy can be pushed aside due to busy schedules. This booklet will hopefully provide families with ideas and tools to enrich Advent with the whole family. Don't feel like you have to do "everything". Choose what seems meaningful and fits within your family's schedule. Some of your choices may become yearly traditions that your children remember for a lifetime. If you have any questions or need further ideas, please don't hesitate to contact Mother Pilar or myself.*

*Blessings,  
Miss Mo*

### **What is Advent?**

Advent, meaning "coming" or "arrival," marks the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. It is a time to pause, reflect, and prepare our hearts for Christ's birth and the continual ways God comes into our lives. As Henri Nouwen reminds us, life is an Advent—an ongoing journey of waiting and welcoming. This sacred season invites us to embrace its stillness and anticipation, ushering in peace and hope amidst the world's busyness.

For many, Advent holds personal significance as the beginning of the church year. However, holiday tasks and expectations can overshadow their more profound meaning in our daily lives. Yet, Advent calls us to something more: a chance to bring our imperfect selves before God and receive the gift of grace. Unlike the transactional idea of rewards for being 'good,' Advent reminds us that God's love is unconditional. It's not about earning favor but recognizing that we are all loved—flaws, doubts, and all.

## Reflections and Practices for Families

In this season of waiting and preparation, families—parents, grandparents, children, and youth—are invited to reflect on how they can foster peace and togetherness. Below are some age-specific suggestions for engaging with Advent:

**For Parents with Young Children:** Create simple, meaningful rituals, like lighting an Advent wreath each night. The Advent wreath, a circular arrangement of evergreen branches with four candles, symbolizes the four weeks of Advent. We light a new candle each week, representing the increasing light of Christ coming into the world. Encourage children to offer prayers, sharing what they hope for or what makes them thankful. Teach them that waiting can be a joyful practice when it's filled with hope and wonder.

**For Parents with Youth:** Teenagers may find meaning in discussing the deeper themes of Advent—hope, peace, joy, and love. Engage them in conversations about how these themes relate to their lives. Involve them in acts of service, such as volunteering or creating small gifts for neighbors. Reflect on how they can bring peace and light into the world.

**For Grandparents with Young Children or Youth:** Inspire the younger generation by sharing stories from your Advent traditions, nurturing a deep sense of continuity and belonging. Involve them in recreating cherished customs, like crafting gifts or celebrating St. Nicholas and St. Lucia. Use this precious time to impart wisdom and prayers, reminding them that their worth is rooted not in perfection but in the love they both give and receive.

**For Parents with Adult Children:** Advent is an opportunity to reconnect and reflect together, even if life has pulled you in different directions. Consider writing letters or sharing a meal to discuss what gives you hope and peace openly. It's a time to strengthen bonds and acknowledge that love, like Christ's, endures through all seasons of life.

## Finding Peace in Imperfection

No matter who we are or where we are on our journey in faith, Advent asks us to let go of the pressure to be perfect. It invites us to offer our whole selves—our joys, struggles, and even our exhaustion—at the feet of Christ. In doing so, we make room for the peace that surpasses understanding.

Finding peace during this season can indeed be a meaningful journey. It might be helpful to simplify our celebrations. Imagine gathering with loved ones to create an Advent wreath or choosing a quiet evening for family prayer—it can bring a sense of togetherness. Taking time for ourselves, even for solitude, can feel refreshing amidst the busyness. And don't underestimate the power of small acts of kindness—whether singing carols or baking treats for those around us. These gestures can uplift our spirits and homes.

## The Call to Community

At its essence, Advent is both a personal and shared journey. Each week, as we gather to light the candles of the Advent wreath, we are reminded of God's boundless love and our collective hope as a faith community. Let us embark on this journey together, discovering joy in simplicity and strength in our unity.

May this Advent season bring peace, joy, and the assurance that Christ comes to meet us where we are, offering love beyond measure.



## Lighting an Advent Wreath-Join St. James' at 10AM Dec. 1

For a complete prayer format for the month of Advent, please see the Advent Evening Prayer Blessings booklet from Mother Pilar. There is an online copy as well as hard copy on the welcome tables. Below is an additional option for Sunday wreath lighting.

### SUNDAYS IN ADVENT

#### *Light an Advent Wreath*



The circular Advent wreath symbolizes God's unending love and eternal joy. Set out your advent wreath and candles on your dinner table. At dinnertime, starting on the first Sunday of Advent, keep the lights off or on dim and light one purple candle.

Before eating, sing a verse from the hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" and pray. Light an additional candle each week of Advent and experience how it becomes brighter and brighter as Christmas approaches. It is Jesus who lights our lives!

*Leader: Come, Lord Jesus, set us free.*

*All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.*

*(Light the Advent candle[s] for that week.)*

*Thank you, Lord, for this season of Advent  
When we prepare for your arrival,  
Help us keep our eyes open  
so we can see you when you come to us.  
Bless this food, which reminds us of the banquet  
we will all share with you one day in heaven. Amen.*

*Leader: Come, Lord Jesus, set us free.*

*All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.*

### **Sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"**

The lyrics of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" set the tone for the Advent season as we wait for the coming of Jesus Christ. As you sing each verse, notice how the mood of the song changes. We start as captives living in exile, tyranny, and darkness. We end the song celebrating Emmanuel's opening of his heavenly home to us. In between, we always sing, "Rejoice!" No matter what, we rejoice because we know Jesus is coming.

How does the call to rejoice feel different to you in each week of Advent? How does it feel to rejoice, no matter what is happening in your life?

## WEEK ONE OF ADVENT

### THIS WEEK, WE FOCUS ON HOPE.

Light, one of the purple candles, called the prophecy candle, which symbolizes the prophets who told of Jesus's coming with anticipation.

### *Make an Advent Banner*



- Cotton Canvas, 1 yard
- Fabric scissors
- Felt, colors of choice
- Iron-on hem tape (optional)
- Felt glue

Cut the cotton canvas to 4 inches x 1 yard (if you want to hem it, give yourself an extra inch on all sides). To make your banner, cut out a triangle from each end. Hem with iron-on tape (optional). Use the template to cut out the letters from your felt; alternatively, freehand trace 3-inch-tail letters onto the felt. Use the felt glue to glue your letters onto the banner. To ensure it's centered, glue the center letters first and then move out to either side. Now, you can hang the banner on your tree, mantel, or kitchen!

### *Reach Out*

Reach out to a friend you know is going through a difficult time. Listen to and support them; they might need it as a sign of hope that light is coming.





## **ST. NICHOLAS**

### **DECEMBER 6**

Born Circa 270 in Patara, Roman Empire (present-day Gelemis, Turkey)

Died circa 343 in Myra, Roman Empire (present-day Demre, Turkey)

**PATRON SAINT OF:** Children, travelers, the falsely accused, repentant thieves, unmarried people, brewers, sailors, anglers, merchants, broadcasters, pharmacists, archers, pawnbrokers, coopers

St. Nicholas, known for his generosity and care for those in need, invites us to reflect on God's call to give joyfully and selflessly. Here are ways to celebrate his feast day, honoring his legacy in ways that resonate with Episcopal values.

### ***Set Out Shoes and Fill with Treats***

Have your household set out their shoes by the door or fireplace the night before St. Nicholas Day. Use this to teach about St. Nicholas's generosity and the joy of giving.

### **Fill the shoes with:**

- **Chocolate coins** (symbolizing the gold St. Nicholas gave)
- **Candy canes** (representing his bishop's crozier)
- **Oranges** (a symbol of generosity and sharing)
- **Affirmation notes or prayers**
- **Small tools or craft supplies** to encourage creating gifts for others

### **Prayer Before Filling the Shoes:**

*Loving God, as we remember your servant, St. Nicholas, may we follow his example of generosity and love. Bless these gifts as symbols of your abundant grace, and help us to share our blessings with others. Amen.*

## Make Orange Surprise Balls

Create fun, meaningful surprises that also symbolize generosity.

### Materials Needed:

- Hollow plastic balls
- Small treats or affirmation notes
- Orange crepe paper
- Green paper or felt (for leaves)
- Tape and scissors

Fill the plastic balls with small treats or notes. Wrap the balls with orange crepe paper and tape them closed. Add green leaves to the top. Place them in shoes or stockings as a special treat for St. Nicholas Day.



**Bless the oranges before beginning:** *God of abundance, bless these oranges as a symbol of generosity and love. May they remind us of St. Nicholas's example and inspire us to serve others with joyful hearts. Amen.*

Follow the instructions to dry and string the orange slices into a garland. Hang it as a visual reminder of the spirit of giving.

## Make a Dried Orange Garland

Transform blessed oranges into a seasonal decoration as a reminder of the joy of giving.

### Materials Needed:

- Oranges
- Baking supplies (knife, parchment paper, etc.)
- Fishing line or string

Preheat your oven to its lowest possible setting, usually 150 degrees Fahrenheit to 225 degrees Fahrenheit (if you don't want to burn your oranges). Line your baking sheet with parchment paper. Slice the oranges into thin rounds and blot them dry with paper towels. Bake for 2 to 3 hours, flipping them halfway through until slightly browned.

Once they are cool, string them on a fishing line about 2 inches apart. Hang them around your house to remind you of the spirit of giving all season.





### **Hang Candy Canes**

Use candy canes to teach about St. Nicholas's role as a bishop and shepherd of his people.

#### **BLESSING FOR CANDY CANES:**

*Come, great-hearted saint,*

*Guide us as we prepare our homes and hearts for the birth of Christ.*

*May these candy canes,*

*Be a sign of Advent joy for us.*

*May these candy canes remind us of your care for the Church and the love of the Good Shepherd. Amen.*

Hang candy canes on your tree or around the house to symbolize joyful anticipation.

### **Give to Someone in Need**

Celebrate St. Nicholas's spirit of giving by helping those in need:

- **Donate to a local charity for Episcopal Relief & Development.**
- **Declutter and donate** gently used items to a shelter or free store.
- **Adopt a family** through a holiday giving program, providing gifts or essentials.

### **Episcopal Liturgical Connection**

#### **Collect for St. Nicholas (Lesser Feasts and Fasts):**

Almighty God, in your love, you gave your servant Nicholas of Myra a perpetual name for deeds of kindness both on land and sea: Grant, we pray that your Church may never cease to work for the happiness of children, the safety of sailors, the relief of the poor, and the help of those tossed by tempests of doubt or grief; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## WEEK TWO OF ADVENT

### **THIS WEEK, WE FOCUS ON PEACE.**

At Sunday dinner, light two purple candles on your Advent wreath. The second purple candle, the Bethlehem candle, symbolizes the Holy Family's experience in Bethlehem.

### **Throw a Baby Shower for Mary**

Celebrate Mary's motherhood by gathering for a time of joy and giving. Ask guests to bring donations for The Rescue Mission.

### **Mary's Refreshments Bar**

Offer a selection of sparkling lemonade, orange juice, and fresh fruit. Highlight the symbolic meaning of strawberries, representing Mary's holiness and fruitfulness.

### **Mini Food**

Serve small, bite-sized foods like:

- Pigs in a blanket (they look like a baby swaddled)
- Mini pancakes and waffles
- Mini pizzas
- Mini quiche

As a nod to the joy of new life.

### **Decorate Swaddle Blankets**

Set up a swaddle decorating station with fabric paint and templates. Guests can create unique blankets and donate them to the nearest diaper pick-up location.

### **Make Space for Prayer**

Provide journals or Advent reflections to encourage quiet time for prayer and contemplation.



## WEEK THREE OF ADVENT GAUDETE SUNDAY

### **FOCUS: JOY**

#### ***Light the Advent Wreath***

At Sunday dinner or during your family prayer time, light two purple candles and the pink candle, also known as the Shepherd's candle. Reflect on the joy that comes from knowing Christ is near.

#### ***Prepare Your Heart: Reflect on Renewal***

Instead of a formal confession, encourage a family or personal reflection time. Set aside a quiet moment to consider ways to welcome Christ into your life. Journaling prompts could include:

- What brings you joy in this season?
- How can you share that joy with others?
- What areas of your life could you turn over to God?

Provide a printed reflection or Advent devotional, drawing from Episcopal resources like *The Book of Common Prayer* or Advent guides specific to your parish.

#### ***Make a Christmas Bell Garland***

Bells symbolize the joy and announcement of Christ's arrival.

- Gather simple materials: Christmas bells, linen ribbon, or macrame jute.
- As you create the garland, reflect on the joyful noise we make to celebrate Christ's birth.
- Hang the garland at home as a reminder of the joy that comes with Emmanuel, God with us.

This craft could also be done as a parish event, inviting families to decorate together after the service.



## SPREAD JOY IN THE COMMUNITY

### **Visit a Nursing Home or Send Christmas Cards**

Instead of visiting the nursing home alone, invite parishioners to participate in a Christmas card drive. Families could write personalized cards, drawing inspiration from the season's joy, and deliver them to nursing homes, parish shut-ins, or local community members who may feel isolated.

**Alternative Option:** Organize a caroling group from the parish to visit local care homes or community spaces and spread joy through music.

### **Adopt a Local Family for Christmas**

Partner with a local family in need in the spirit of sharing joy. Provide gifts, groceries, or a festive meal for their celebration. Uplifting the poorest among us aligns with the Episcopal Church's commitment to outreach and loving our neighbors as Christ taught.

### **Joyful Worship**

During the service, consider adding music or liturgy elements that highlight joy:

- Sing a verse from "Joy to the World" or other uplifting hymns during the lighting of the advent wreath.
- Include a short sermon of children's messages focused on finding joy even during preparation and waiting.

These traditions celebrate the joy of Gaudete Sunday while keeping St. James' specific character and practices in mind.



**AdventWord**  
DECEMBER 1-25 **2024**

1	HUMILITY	14	PROCLAIM
2	ABOUND	15	REJOICE
3	REDEMPTION	16	GENTLENESS
4	SPROUT	17	TRUST
5	EARNESTLY	18	GATHER
6	FAITHFULNESS	19	HOME
7	SAFETY	20	LOVE
8	SPLENDOR	21	MERCY
9	REFINE	22	LIFTED
10	JOY	23	SHINE
11	PREPARE	24	COME
12	RIGHTEOUSNESS	25	FRUIT
13	SALVATION		

adventword.org 



## WEEK FOUR OF ADVENT

### THIS WEEK, WE FOCUS ON LOVE.

Light all four of the candles. The last purple candle is the Angel's candle, which symbolizes God's endless love - God sent the angels four times to prepare people for Jesus.



#### ***Make a Christmas Tree Angel***

- Spun cotton ball
- Paper-mache cone
- Pipe cleaner
- Colorful felt sheets
- Felting wool (optional)
- Small felt balls of various colors
- Craft paint
- Paintbrush
- Felt glue
- Glue gun
- Hot glue
- Scissors

Start by painting the angel's face on the spun cotton ball. Keep the face simple. You can paint on the hair or attach wool to the head. Cut off the top of your paper mache cone, so it is flat and a good base for your spun cotton ball head. Hot glue the ball onto the top and let it cool. Then, glue a felt sheet on the cone as a dress. Wrap your pipe cleaner around the back of the cone where the shoulders might be, and hot glue in place to create two arms.

Wrap felting wool or felt sheep scraps around the torso to create a shirt and around the pipe cleaner arms to create sleeves. You can even make little mittens to cover the ends of the arms. Use felt glue to glue on the felt pom-poms on the dress. Now, she's ready to be placed at the top of your Christmas tree.



# CHRISTMAS EVE

DECEMBER 24

On Christmas Eve, we await the coming of Christ. Mary is laboring to give birth to Emmanuel, a name that means "God with Us."

## Decorate Your Christmas Tree Together as a Family

Decorate your tree as a family today! You could even pick out the tree at a Christmas tree lot today. Drink hot cocoa and spend time together.

**Go to Church!** St. James' has 3 worship services to choose from—we highly recommend the 4PM Family Christmas Service with Children's Pageant-ALL LIVE this YEAR!



**St. James' Christmas Worship**  
**December 24-Christmas Eve**

- 4PM Family Christmas Service with Children's Pageant
- 7PM Christmas Eucharist with Contemporary Music
- 9:30PM Special Music Selections
- 10PM Christmas Eucharist with Organ & Choir

\*All Worship is In-Person & Live-Streamed on [facebook.com/StJamesSkaneateles](https://www.facebook.com/StJamesSkaneateles)

