



Advent Toolkit 2023



Rather than rushing ahead to Christmas, let's slow down a bit and appreciate the Advent season. Advent is a time of anticipation, preparation, and expectation. Although we commonly think of the days leading up to Christmas as the close of our calendar year, the Advent season is the beginning of the Christian year, ushering in the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. Advent begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and continues through Christmas Eve, thus beginning on Sunday, December 3rd this year.

Devotionals

Devotionals and readings are not just biblical passages. They can be pieces of music, good stories that bring you closer to the meaning of Christmas, and, yes, Biblical stories and passages.

[Anglican-Lutheran Advent Devotions](#). A meditation for each Sunday in Advent. Liberated by God's Grace; Creation – Not for Sale; Salvation – Not for Sale; Human Beings – Not for Sale. (Pdf download)

[Advent Study 2023: Reflections at Advent on Bonhoeffer's Meditations](#). The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Designed to accompany the reading of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Advent meditations, [God is in the Manger](#). Set up in four chapters, one for each week of Advent to accompany the four sets of weekly readings in *God is in the Manger*, the study guide includes suggested spiritual practices and discussion questions to encourage you to engage in Bonhoeffer's reflections more deeply.

[A Journey to Christmas](#), by Anne Miller. The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Explores the stories of Zechariah, Mary, Elizabeth, John, Joseph and the shepherds as they are given the good news of Jesus' coming and as they experience the miracle of his birth.

[Body Prayers for Advent](#). United Church of Canada.

Use your whole body to pray for Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

[Arts & Faith: Advent](#). Loyola Press. [Follow the links for Cycle B]

A video commentary about a work of art inspired by the Sunday Scriptures. Use these videos to take a new look at this season of hope and preparation through the lens of sacred art. Video transcripts are included.

Activities

Advent Wreath

You can light it before dinner, say an Advent prayer, and suddenly, you join a celestial family of people doing the same thing worldwide!

[Ten Things you May not Know about the Advent Wreath Tradition](#).

The Shape, The Composition, The Candles, The Colours, The Preparation, The Ritual, The Routine, The Glory.

Make One for Use at Home

[Simple Advent Wreath DIY](#) (Joyfully Domestic):

[Make an Advent Wreath for Your Family](#) (Instructables)



Jesse Tree

What is it? The Jesse Tree is typically depicted as a tree or branch, often drawn or displayed as an actual tree branch or as an ornamental tree design. The branches are decorated with various symbols, each representing a person or an event from the Old Testament that played a significant role in the lineage leading to the birth of Jesus. Each symbol is usually accompanied by a scripture passage or a brief explanation that tells the associated Old Testament story.

How Does It Work? Beginning on December 1st or the first Sunday of Advent, families or congregations often read a related scripture passage and hang an ornament or symbol on the Jesse Tree each day until December 25th. By Christmas, the Jesse Tree is fully adorned, and its decorations collectively tell the story of Jesus' ancestry and the anticipation of His birth.



This tradition serves as a reminder of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the continuity between the Old and New Testaments. It helps Christians to connect the stories and figures of the Old Testament with the birth of Jesus, emphasizing the role of these figures and events in the divine plan of salvation. The Jesse Tree tradition is a meaningful way for Christians to reflect on Christmas's true meaning and appreciate the historical and spiritual context of the birth of Jesus.

Where do I find the readings? A free downloadable ebook is available [HERE](#). It includes daily readings, and devotions as well an image associated with each daily reading. These images can be used as ornaments for your Jesse Tree.

Other Advent Calendars

It doesn't have to be about chocolate! You can make your own Advent calendar filled with other kinds of gifts.



For example, make an Advent Gratitude Calendar. Take a regular calendar and use Post It notes to write down a Random Act of Kindness to do each day. On days where it's impossible to do a Random Act of Kindness, simply write down something for which you are grateful. Or use this as a journaling guide for December.

Make a Nativity Scene

The crèche is a great physical reminder of what this season is about. It shows the everyday bustling life of a community 2,000 years ago and the specialness of that single night. God Himself, coming to inhabit a human form in the lowest possible circumstance. He came as the surrogate son of a handyman and a young girl who didn't have the money or clout to push someone out of their bed for the night.

You don't have to be a master carpenter! All you need is basic painting skills and the ability to construct simple things out of cardboard. Try it out [HERE](#) (DIY Candy).

