Advent, Christmas and Epiphany



AN ACTIVITY BOOK FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

YEAR B

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ADVENT

ADVENT MEANS "COMING" and during these first weeks of the new church year we await the coming of Christ. Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation. We prepare for Jesus by making room in our hearts. The season of Advent comes at the darkest time of the year so we light candles on our Advent wreaths as a reminder that Jesus was born to be a light to all people. Jesus, the light of the world, helps us find our way even in the dark. God loves us so much; God gave us the perfect gift, the Christ child.

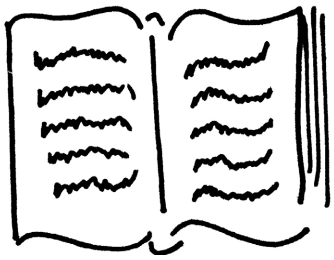
You will notice many changes at church during Advent. The hangings in the church are blue to reflect the theme of hope and expectation. Because Advent is a penitential season (though not as deeply penitential as Lent), there are no flowers in the church, but greens are used instead. The birth of Jesus fulfilled the words of Israel's prophets, and we hear prophecies that tell us of the coming of a Messiah as well as stories about John the Baptist. In the Great Hall there are no colorful hangings during Advent, but the frontal (the large cloth on the altar) shows a stable scene. Each week, something or someone will be added to the scene. In both the church nave and in the Great Hall there are Advent wreaths to help us grow in excitement and anticipation of the baby Jesus.

COLLECTS AND SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE SUNDAYS OF ADVENT

First Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

YEAR A	YEAR B	YEAR C
Isaiah 2:1-5	Isaiah 64:1-9	Zechariah 14:4-9
Psalm 122	Psalm 80	Psalm 50
Romans 13:8-14	1 Corinthians 1:1-9	1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Matthew 24:37-44	Mark 13:24-37	Luke 21:25-31



Second Sunday of Advent

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

YEAR A	YEAR B	YEAR C
Isaiah 11:1-10	Isaiah 40:1-11	Baruch 5:1-9
Psalm 72	Psalm 85	Psalm 126
Romans 15:4-13	2 Peter 3:8-15	Philippians 1:1-11
Matthew 3:1-12	Mark 1:1-8	Luke 3:1-6

Third Sunday of Advent

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

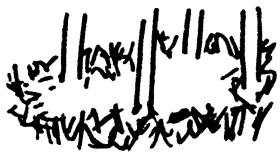
YEAR A	YEAR B	YEAR C
Isaiah 35:1-10	Isaiah 65:17-25	Zephaniah 3:14-20
Psalm 146	Psalm 126	Psalm 85
James 5:7-10	1 Thessalonians 5:16-28	Philippians 4:4-7
Matthew 11:2-11	John 1:6-8, 19-28	Luke 3:7-18

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

YEAR A	YEAR B	YEAR C
Isaiah 7:10-17	2 Samuel 7:8-16	Micah 5:2-4
Psalm 24	Psalm 132	Psalm 80
Romans 1:1-7	Romans 16:25-27	Hebrews 10:5-10
Matthew 1:18-25	Luke 1:26-38	Luke 1:39-49

ADVENT WREATHS AND THEIR SYMBOLISM



We use the Advent wreath as a symbol of the coming of Christ. It is a circle that has no beginning and no end, like God. The candles represent the light of Christ and each week we light an additional candle to show us we are getting closer to the birth of Jesus. There are five candles in an Advent wreath — one for each Sunday in Advent and one for the Feast of the Nativity (Christmas). The candles for the Sundays in Advent are purple (for royalty) or blue (for hope and expectation), as we wait in hope for the coming of the King. The candle for the third Sunday (which is called Rose Sunday) is usually pink. It signifies a "lighter" day as Christ is coming soon!

The candle in the center is white to celebrate the Feast of the Nativity, Jesus' birth. Evergreens decorate the wreath, symbolizing everlasting life. Many children find that an Advent wreath looks like a birthday cake. This is a wonderful analogy since the more candles you light, the closer you are to Jesus' birthday—Christmas.

PRAYERS FOR LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH



Week One

Loving God, be with us this Advent season and help us to slow down, be quiet and prepare for the coming of Christ. You created light and gave us the light of the world, Jesus. As we light this candle, keep us mindful of the light of Christ in each person and help us to be a light to others. Amen.

Week Two

God of love and peace, this Advent season help us to watch and wait for the coming of the Christ child. Open our eyes that we may see, open our ears that we may hear and open our hands that we may serve, but most of all open our hearts to receive your love and to know when Jesus is with us. Amen.

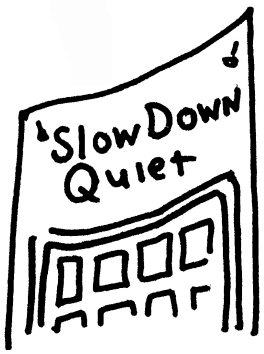
Week Three

O God, you sent messengers to tell us of the coming of the Messiah. Help us to be messengers to the world about the light of Christ. Amen.

Week Four

Gracious God, Giver of all gifts, prepare us for the greatest gift. Help us to welcome Jesus into our hearts, celebrate your love and be at peace in your light. Amen.

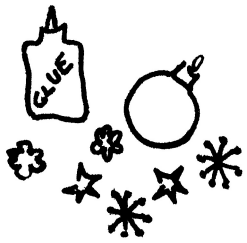
ADVENT AT HOME



1 **Slow down. Quiet. It's Advent!** Use an Advent calendar. It's a great way to find a focus for each day of Advent. Put it in a place where everyone can see it, and establish a time to look at the message for each day. Discuss it as a family: What does it mean for you?

2 **Slow down.** This Advent season, eliminate those things that make your life crazy. This seems to be the busiest season, but does it have to be? What can you let go of this Advent?

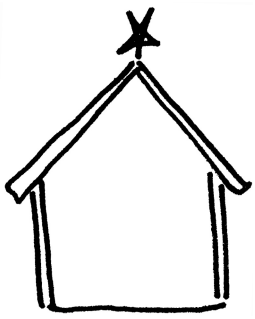
3 **Quiet.** This is one of the hardest things to achieve at this time of year, yet one of the most important. Establish a quiet space in your home with perhaps a candle, Bible, book, materials to write your own prayers, etc., to help you focus on the reason for the season. Children can participate in this as well. They need some quiet time too. It need not be a long time, but what if you and everyone in your house had just five minutes of quiet every day? What a gift that would be!



4 **Make your own Christmas tree ornaments.** Arts and crafts stores can help you with ornaments to decorate—from glass balls that children can paint to wooden Christmas items that they can decorate any way they choose. Make them for your family's tree or to give away.

5 **Read a classic Christmas book aloud together.** Traditions begin at home. Pick a story that you enjoyed as a child and read it aloud as a family. Chapter books work well, but reading picture books about the season can also be a great way to get children excited about the coming of Jesus.

6 **Table spirituality during Advent.** Have your family commit to having one meal a day together. Before the meal, light the candles on your Advent wreath and use the prayers provided in this packet as your blessing. Use the Advent calendar as a topic of conversation at the table.

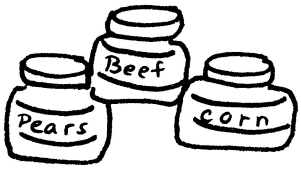


7 **Create your own "Journey to Bethlehem" in your home.** Get a crèche set, if you don't have one already, and put the stable in a special and central location in your home. Have Mary and Joseph move from room to room as they travel to the stable, to remember the journey they made to Bethlehem. As Christmas Eve gets closer, Mary and Joseph should come nearer to the stable. They should arrive there on Christmas Eve, along with angels and shepherds. Baby Jesus appears on Christmas Day and the three wise men arrive 12 days later, on Epiphany.

8 **While you're decorating your tree inside, don't forget about the trees outside.** String some popcorn and cranberries for the birds and decorate the trees in your back yard.

9 **Go Christmas caroling.** Gather your family, friends and other parishioners and go Christmas caroling.

10 **Give outgrown toys away to others.** Help your children go through their toys, pull out the ones that they don't play with and that are in good shape, and donate them to a charitable organization that takes used items.



11 **Get ready for the baby.** As we await the coming of baby Jesus, many who have very little are getting ready to have babies too. When you are out shopping, buy baby food for a local food pantry.

12 **Pray for an Advent buddy.** In your household or with a group of friends, draw names and then pray for the person drawn throughout the season of Advent.

13 **Practice patience this Advent** while waiting in lines, in traffic or in the post office, and at home and in the office.



14 **All God's children enjoy a classic.** Make sure that you and your family catch one of these programs — "Charlie Brown's Christmas" (Linus recites the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke and "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (the animated version).

15 **Decoration Day.** Help with the greening and cleaning of your home and/or church.

16 **This Advent season go to a quiet place in your home and pray for peace.**

17 **Write a thank you note to an angel in your life.** Be an angel and use an Angel Tree to buy a gift for a child in need.

18 **Make your Christmas tree a "give-away-tree" too.** Have each person in your household contribute a giving card for the tree. The card should describe a gift of service that each person is willing to give away. (I will wash the dishes for a week, I will take out the trash, I will bring canned food to church, etc.)

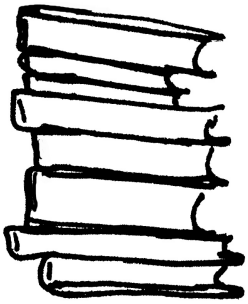
19 **Share your family memories of past Christmases.** Take a night to look at pictures, home movies or videos of past celebrations.

20 **Joy to the World.** We are all so blessed. What are the joys in your own life? Take time to give thanks in prayer for those things that bring joy to your life.

Video Christmas Resources

Amahl and the Night Visitors (CD).....Menotti, Giancarlo
The Best Christmas Pageant Ever
A Charlie Brown Christmas
The Fourth Wise Man: He Gave the Greatest Gift of All
How the Grinch Stole Christmas!
The Little Drummer Boy
The Toy That Saved Christmas.....Veggie Tales
A Very Veggie Christmas.....Veggie Tales

ADVENT BIBLIOGRAPHY



Books on Advent and Christmas

The Nativity ..... Vivas, Julie

Stories Behind the Best Loved Songs of Christmas ..... Collins, Ace

What We Do in Advent ..... Kitch, Anne

A Child is Born ..... Brown, Margaret Wise

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever ..... Robinson, Barbara

Christmas ..... Barth, Karl

A Christmas Carol ..... Dickens, Charles

Christmas Star (board book)

Christmas Stories ..... Dickens, Charles

Family Christmas Treasury ..... Hague, M.

The Friendly Beasts ..... de Paola, Tomie

Joy to the World ..... de Paola, Tomie

Life of Jesus in Masterpieces ..... Osborne, Mary Pope

The Little Drummer Boy ..... Keats, Ezra Jack

Mary's First Christmas ..... Wangerin, Jr., Walter

Legend of Poinsettia ..... de Paola, T.

Let's Make a Jesse Tree ..... James, Darcy

Merry Christmas, Strega Nona ..... dePaola, T.

On the Way to Bethlehem ..... Goodlin, Richard

The Real 12 Days of Christmas ..... Haidle, Helen

The Singing Shepherd ..... Hunt, Angela

Sister Wendy's Nativity ..... Beckett, Sister Wendy

Spirit of Christmas ..... Van Dyke, Henry

St. Francis and the Christmas Donkey ..... Byrd, Robert

St. Francis Celebrates Christmas ..... Walsh, Mary Caswell

Story of the Other Wise Man ..... van Dyke, Henry

These Twelve Days ..... Kasperson, James

This Is the Star ..... Dunbar, Joyce

The Legend of the Candy Cane ..... Walburg, Lori

CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS DAY

THE TIME HAS COME. The miracle we have been waiting for is here. The Christ child is born and enters our hearts and lives again. We celebrate and rejoice at this mystery and miracle. Christmas is not just a day, it's a season and a time of great joy and celebration in our homes and at church. The season of Christmas lasts for 12 days, not just one, giving us ample time to rejoice in the coming of the Christ child. The days are getting longer, children are out of school, and the three kings are on their way to the manger. Come along with us as we journey through the 12 Days of Christmas, giving and receiving, helping others and seeing the Nativity in new ways. In church you will notice that the hangings have changed to white, representing the purity of the Christ child, and beautiful flowers have returned as well.

Here are some ways to celebrate the season of Christmas.

DECEMBER 25

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JESUS! Light the Christ candle in the middle of your Advent wreath, and sing a Christmas carol for the newborn baby.

DECEMBER 26

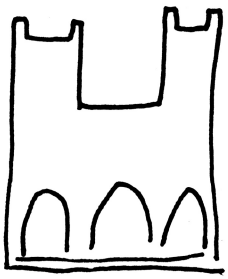
St. Stephen's Day. Stephen is an important figure in the early church. You can read about him in the sixth chapter of Acts. This is a good day to write thank-you letters.



DECEMBER 27

St. John the Evangelist Day (I John 1:1-9) Look up the following Bible passages (each passage introduces one of John's *I am* statements) and look at all the metaphors for Jesus.

- John 6:35 I am the bread of life.
- John 8:12 I am the light of the world.
- John 10:9 I am the gate. (Also translated as "I am the door.")
- John 10:11 I am the Good Shepherd.
- John 11:25 I am the resurrection and the life.
- John 14:6 I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
- John 15:1 I am the true vine.
- John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches.



DECEMBER 28

Holy Innocents Day (Matthew 2:13-18). Start a Memory Box. Cover and decorate a sturdy box, write special Christmas memories or gather your Christmas pictures and put them in the box.

DECEMBER 29

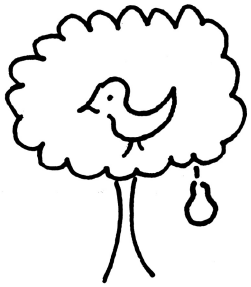
Visit Washington National Cathedral Online and look at all the scenes on display throughout the website. Did you see any animals, shepherds, or angels?

DECEMBER 30

Surprise your parents and clean your room without being told.

DECEMBER 31

Take a long walk, play outside or visit a friend or neighbor with appropriate social distancing or online.



JANUARY 1

Holy Name Day (Luke 2:15-21). HAPPY NEW YEAR!

JANUARY 2

Access nativity art online at the National Gallery of Art or the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

JANUARY 3

Read "The Real 12 Days of Christmas," available for purchase on Amazon. Find out the symbolism behind the items in the song "The 12 Days of Christmas."

JANUARY 4

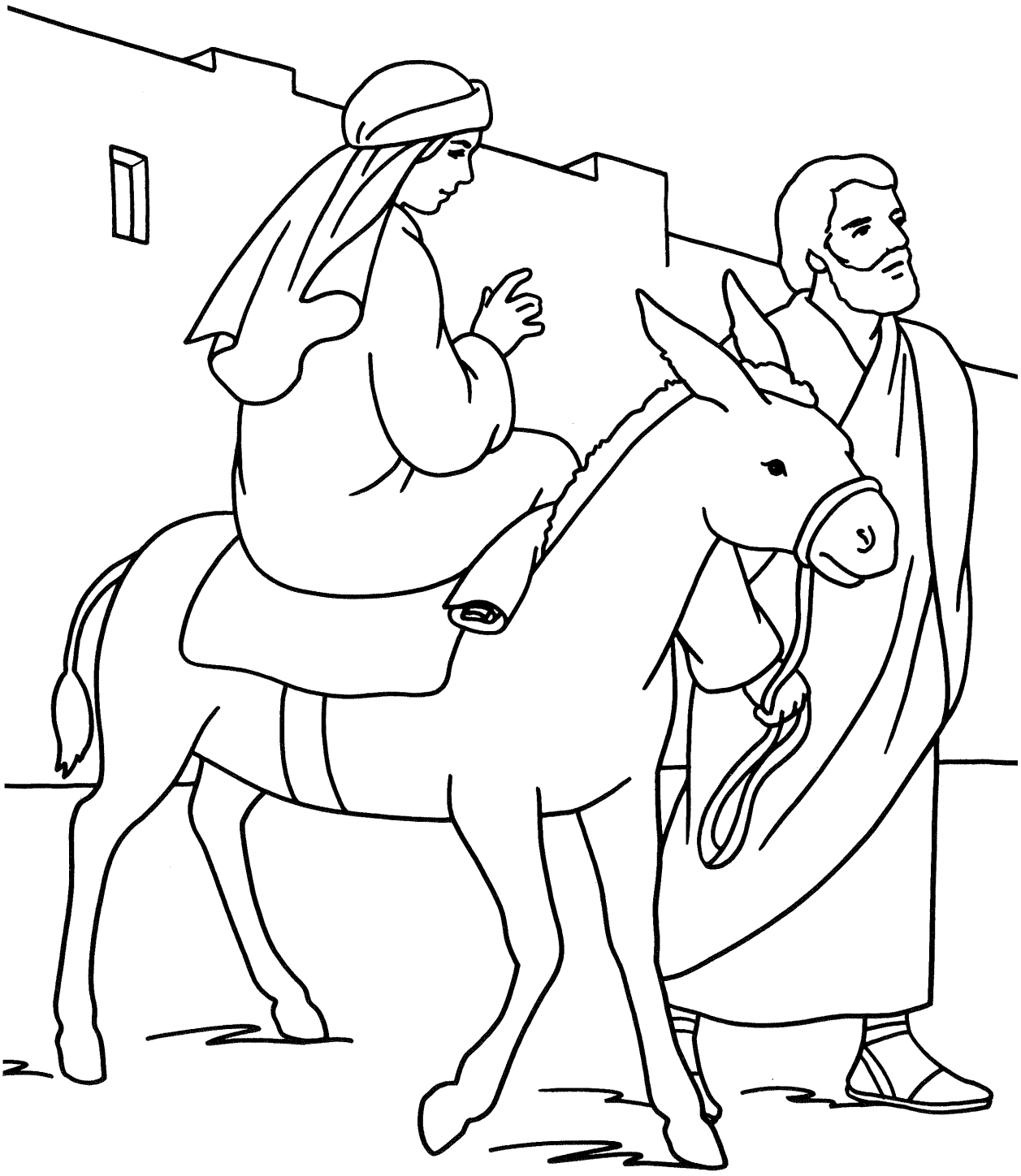
The days are getting longer. Eat dinner by candlelight to celebrate the light of Christ in the world. Make up a new table grace for the new year.



JANUARY 5

Make a Three Kings cake for the Feast of the Epiphany tomorrow. Bake three beans in a cake; those who find the beans are Magi-for-a-Day. Make crowns for the Magi to wear.





Mary and Joseph went on a long trip to Bethlehem.
There they could find no room in the inn. *Luke 2:1-7*



Jesus Is Born
Luke 2

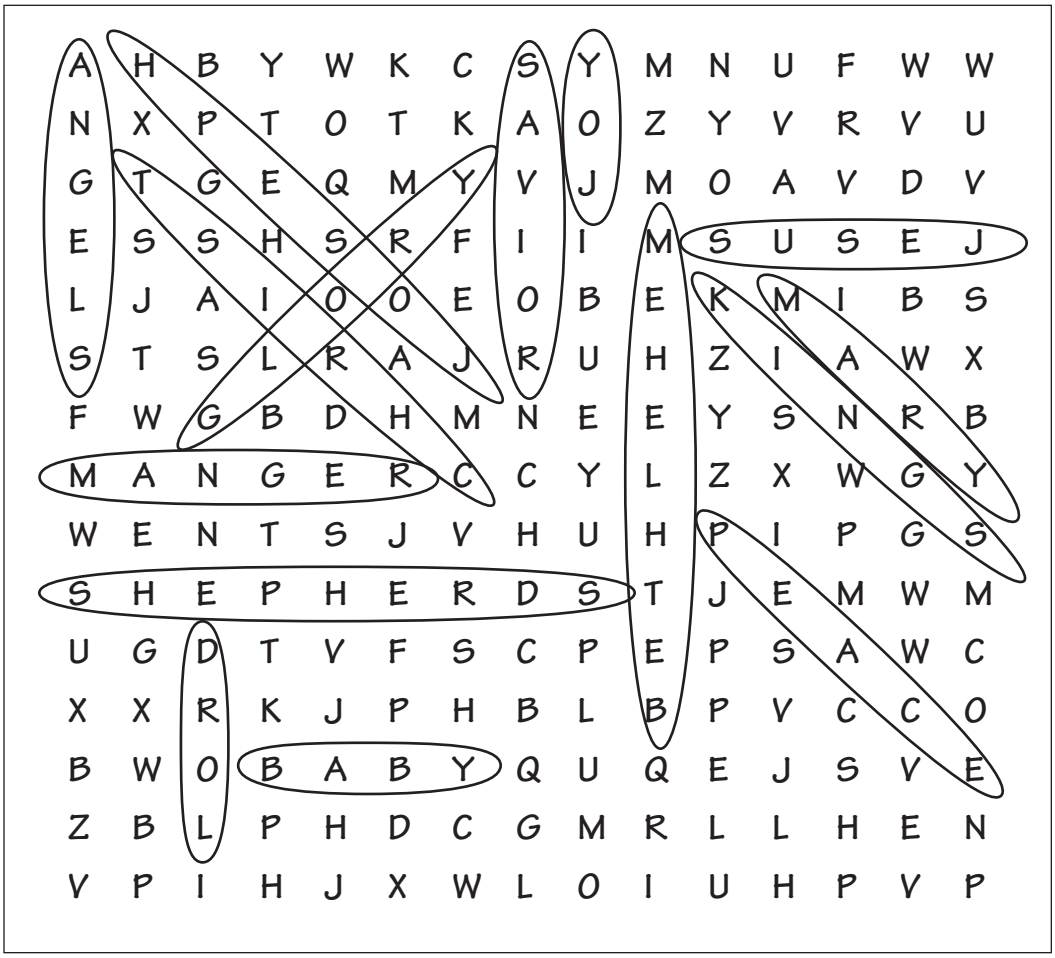
Christmas Word Search

Find all the words from the list below. Each letter is used once only.

A H B Y W K C S Y M N U F W W
N X P T O T K A O Z Y V R V U
G T G E Q M Y V J M O A V D V
E S S H S R F I I M S U S E J
L J A I O O E O B E K M I B S
S T S L R A J R U H Z I A W X
F W G B D H M N E E Y S N R B
M A N G E R C C Y L Z X W G Y
W E N T S J V H U H P I P G S
S H E P H E R D S T J E M W M
U G D T V F S C P E P S A W C
X X R K J P H B L B P V C C O
B W O B A B Y Q U Q E J S V E
Z B L P H D C G M R L L H E N
V P I H J X W L O I U H P V P

ANGELS
BABY
BETHLEHEM
CHRIST
GLORY
JESUS
JOSEPH
JOY
KINGS
LORD
MANGER
MARY
PEACE
SAVIOR
SHEPHERDS

(Here's the solution to the Christmas word search on page 12.)





EPIPHANY

EPIPHANY IS A DAY AND THE NAME OF A SEASON in the church year. The Feast of Epiphany is on January 6 and the symbol of the season is light, God revealed in the manifestation of the Christ child. Epiphany is the day we recognize the Magi or three kings arriving to pay homage to the new king, Jesus. They followed the star which led them to the newborn king in Bethlehem. The gifts they brought were gold, frankincense and myrrh; these gifts represent the royal and divine nature of the baby Jesus.

The season of Epiphany can last for four to nine weeks, as the end of Epiphany is based on the date of Ash Wednesday, which in turn, is based on the date for Easter. The baptism of Jesus is remembered on the Sunday after Epiphany. This event signifies Jesus being further revealed to the world as the Son of God and touched by Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The color for the season of Epiphany in the church is green.

COLLECT FOR EPIPHANY

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith to our presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

ACTIVITIES AT SAINT COLUMBA'S

ACTIVITIES TO CELEBRATE EPIPHANY IN YOUR HOME

1. **Bring out the three kings on Epiphany** and have them join the Holy Family in your crèche scene.
2. **Have an Epiphany party.** Make a Three Kings cake and give each other Epiphany gifts to remind us of the gifts the kings brought to the baby Jesus, the newborn king.
3. **Make stars in honor of the star that led the kings.** Decorate them for each person's door in the home.
4. **Light candles at dinner during Epiphany** to remember that Jesus is the light of the world.



5 **Have an Epiphany scavenger hunt in your house.** Look for some thing gold, something that smells sweet, a gift you received recently, a picture of a baby and something that gives light.

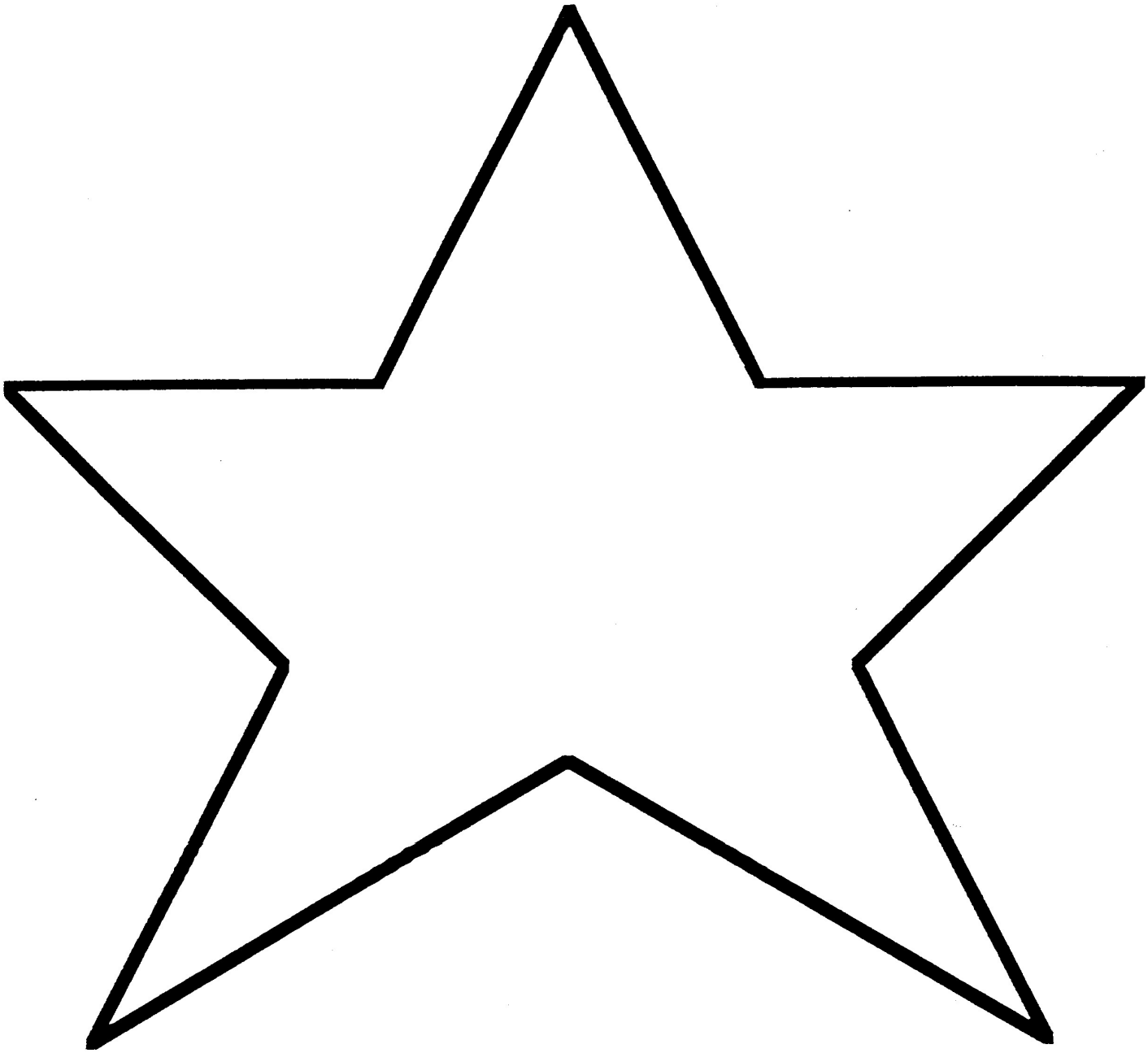
6 **Remember that the three kings brought gifts to Jesus.** What can you give to someone else to share the joy of Jesus in the world?



7 **Make crowns at home** one night during Epiphany to remember the kings who traveled so far to see Jesus.

8 **During Epiphany read these passages in the Bible:**

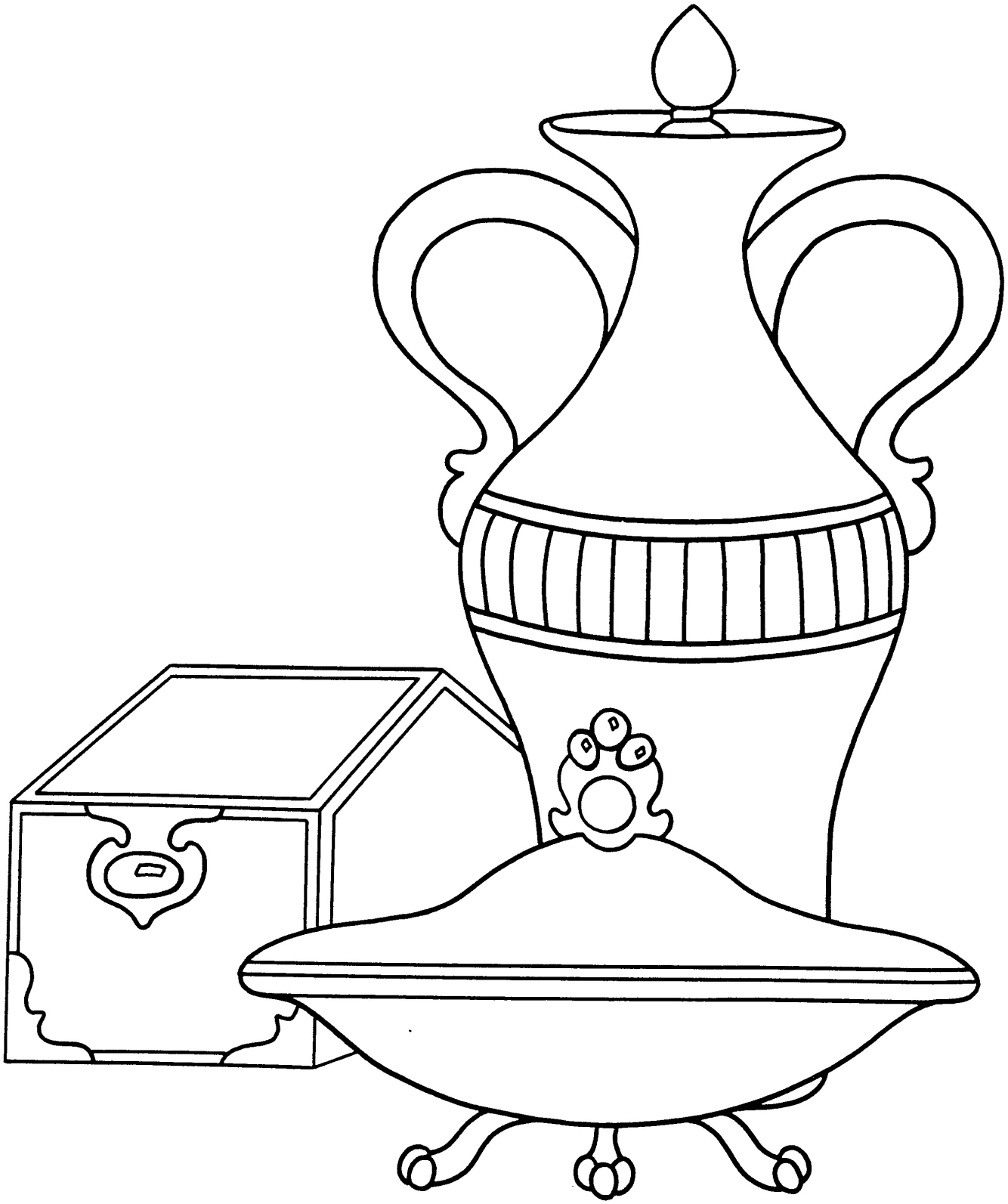
- The visit of the Magi Matthew 2:1-12
- The baptism of Jesus Mark 1:1-9
- The wedding at Cana John 2:1-11
- Jesus calls his disciples Luke 5:1-11



Wise men come to worship.

Matthew 2:1-12





The Wise men came to Bethlehem with fine gifts for the baby Jesus.

– Matthew 2:10-12



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