Carrying the Gifts of Christmas through Epiphany

2026

FAMILY ADVENT AND EPIPHANY ACTIVITIES



PREPARED BY
SONKA'S FAITH FORMATION TEAM

A Welcome from SONKA's Faith Formation Team

Dear Friends and Families,

Advent is more than a countdown to Christmas. It is an invitation to slow down, breathe deeply, and rediscover the gifts of **hope, peace, joy, and love**—gifts that cannot be wrapped or placed under a tree. Christmas isn't just a date on the calendar; it's an opportunity to see the world with wonder, gratitude, and a renewed awareness of God's presence in our everyday lives.

This year, SONKA's Faith Formation Team invites you to journey through Advent and Epiphany as we explore the theme **"Carrying the Gifts of Christmas Through Epiphany."** Through scripture reflections, thoughtful questions, simple activities, and opportunities to serve others, we hope you will discover ways to receive God's gifts and, more importantly, share them with the world around you.

We encourage you to begin with **The Gift of Hope Week** and continue through Peace, Joy, Love, and finally, the Gift of Light during Epiphany. Each week offers opportunities to *Unwrap the Gift* through scripture and reflection, then *Carry the Gift* through simple acts of kindness and faith. Throughout the season, look for those special "God moments" when you experience God's presence or see God's love at work in others.

We also invite you to add an outreach activity to each week as time allows. Choose from the suggestions included in this packet or come up with something meaningful of your own. Sometimes the simplest gestures—a phone call, a handwritten note, a helping hand, or time spent with someone—can be the greatest gifts we give.



Most importantly, remember that this season is meant to be joyous! It is a wonderful time of giving and receiving, not only presents, but also the gifts of ourselves, our kindness, and our time. Do not place more into your week than you have time for. These activities are not another holiday to-do list. Choose what works for you, your family, and your schedule. The goal is not to do everything, but to find meaningful moments to connect with God and one another.

As we move from the anticipation of Advent to the celebration of Christmas and the light of Epiphany, may we remember that the greatest gifts of Christmas are not meant to be kept. They are meant to be carried into our homes, our communities, and the world.

May these reflections and activities bring many thoughtful, meaningful, and joyous moments to your holiday season. And may the gifts of hope, peace, joy, love, and light continue to shine through you long after Christmas has passed.

Wishing you a blessed Advent, a joyous Christmas, and a light-filled Epiphany!

With blessings,

SONKA Faith Formation Team



Hope

Scripture: Mark 13:24-37

Hope reminds us that even when life feels uncertain, God is faithful and always keeps God's promises.

Unwrapping the gift:

1. Jesus tells us to "keep awake" and be ready. What are some ways we can watch for signs of God's hope in the world around us?
2. Hope is a gift we can share. How can you help someone who might be feeling discouraged or worried this Christmas season?

Carry the Gift:

This week, look for little signs of hope each day. It might be a kind word, a helping hand, or a moment of unexpected joy. How can you pass that hope along to someone else?



The Gift of Hope Week

Hope: a feeling that what is wanted will happen.
What do you hope for this season?
What do you think someone else might be hoping for?
How might we respond to that need? Make it happen?

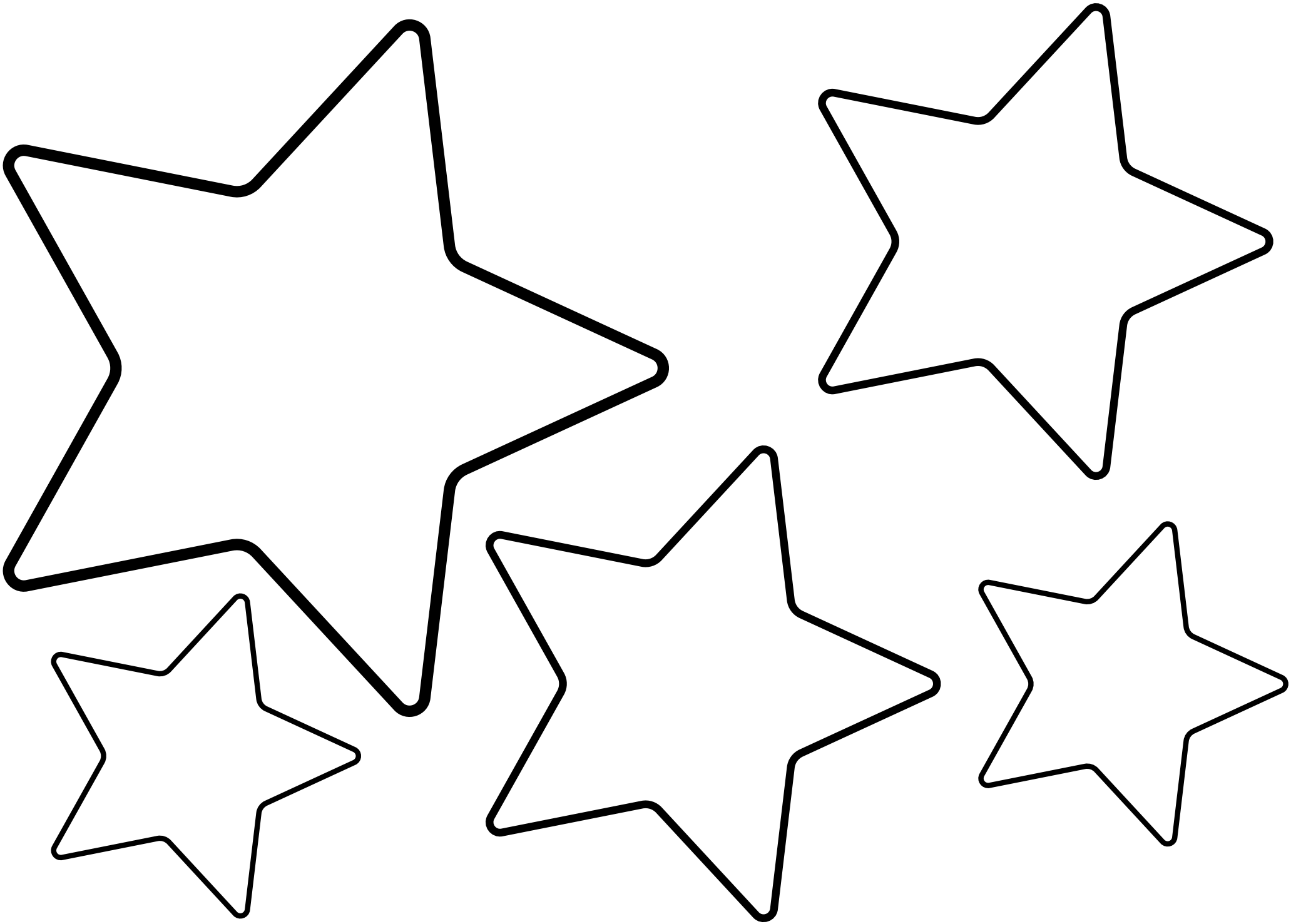
The Christmas story is all about hope. The people of that time were looking for a messiah to lead them out of their circumstances. A child is born who will respond to those needs, someone who will teach them the way of God and give them great hope for their futures. The next four weeks will carry us to the birth of Jesus, the awaited messiah present in a sweet baby boy. Let us begin the journey of Advent, the story of Jesus' birth. Our focus will be around where we see or experience God during this time.

- Throughout the weeks of Advent, you will be watching for gifts from or to God. Where have you done something for others that could be considered a gift to God? Where have you seen a gift from God to you or someone else? Throughout the season you will be writing these sightings on stars and placing them in a container for reviewing later in the season.
- This week you will want to create a container for collecting your stars. This might be a box, jar, or gift bag. Make sure it is large enough for the entire family to use. Create an Advent wreath on your container, where you can add a yellow flame to one candle each week as we mark off the time to our celebration of Christmas. On Christmas Eve you will add a flame to the Christ candle in the middle of your wreath. Hope for the people has been born!



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Make as many copies of this page as needed. Or make stars from any paper you have availbale.



Peace

Scripture: Mark 1:1-8
John the Baptist calls people to prepare the way for Jesus. Advent invites us to slow down, make room for God, and welcome the peace Christ brings.

Unwrapping the gift:

1. Advent can be a busy season! What is one thing you can do to slow down and make more room for Jesus in your heart and life?
2. John helped prepare the way for Jesus. How can your words and actions help bring peace to your home, school, workplace, or community?

Carry the Gift: Find one way to be a peacemaker this week. Offer forgiveness, share a kind word, listen patiently, or spend a few quiet moments with God.



The Gift of Peace Week

Peace: freedom from disagreement or quarrels; an undisturbed frame of mind; calm; quiet; tranquility

- When we focus on the life of Jesus and his teachings, we bring peace into our lives. He was all about inclusion. Each of us is a special child of God. What a good feeling to know we are accepted just as we are, ever-evolving children of God. Not perfect, but faithful to following the teachings of Jesus.
- This week we will make an ornament to be hung on our tree or somewhere special in our house, a symbol of peace, a reminder that we are to bring peace to the world with our calming presence. We will include several templates for dove ornaments for you to choose from, the symbol of peace.
- Feel free to make one, or more, to place on your Christmas tree, your special tree representing joy, and/or just hang them around your house. What a wonderful way to remind you to be peaceful throughout this season and even beyond.
- Remember to watch for the many peaceful moments in your days, those “God moments” to place on your stars.





Make as many copies of this page as needed. Use cardstock or other paper/material you have available.

Joy

Scripture: John 1:6-8, 19-28
John came to point others toward Jesus, the true Light. The joy of Christmas isn't just about presents and celebrations. It's about the incredible gift of Jesus coming into our world!

Unwrapping the gift:

1. John helped others recognize the light of Jesus. Where have you noticed God's light bringing joy into your life?
2. Joy grows when we share it! What are some simple ways you can help someone else experience the joy of Christmas?

Carry the Gift: Spread a little extra joy this week! Share a smile, surprise someone with a kind gesture, or tell someone why they are a blessing in your life.



The Gift of Joy Week

Joy: a very glad feeling; happiness; great pleasure; delight.

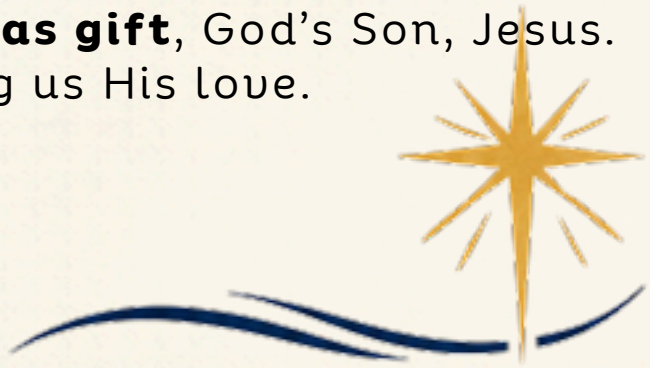
- Let's decorate a Christmas tree that will bring us much joy in creating and even more joy to the person/s we are giving it to. Will you want to keep this tree? Will you want to give it to someone special, or even someone you don't even know? This will all make a difference in the kind of tree and size of tree you choose.
- Decide on the size of your tree. It might be a paper tree, a felt tree or even one with pine branches. The joy is in the creating and decorating, learning about the many symbols of the decorations we place upon the tree. You might spend one day in your creation or spread it out over the week, learning as much as you have time for.
- You will find great joy in the creating and gifting of this special tree.
- Remember to watch for the many joyful moments in your days, those "God moments" to place on your stars.

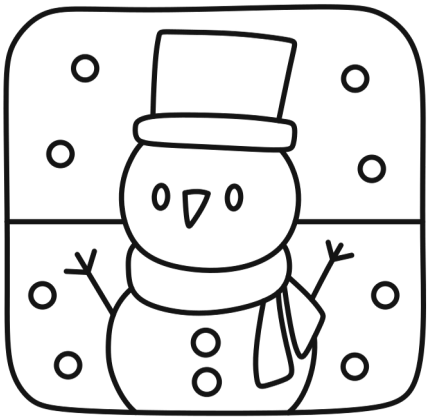


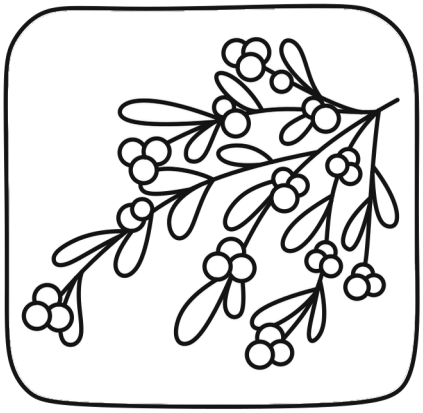
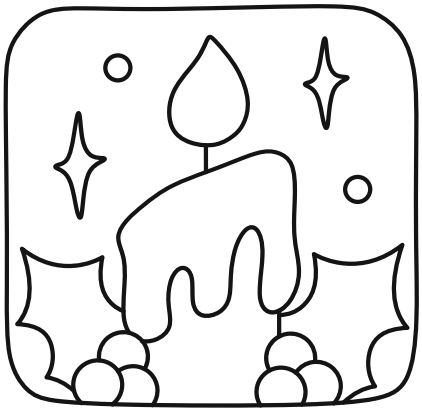
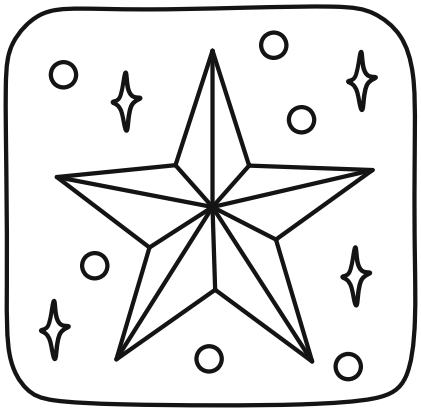
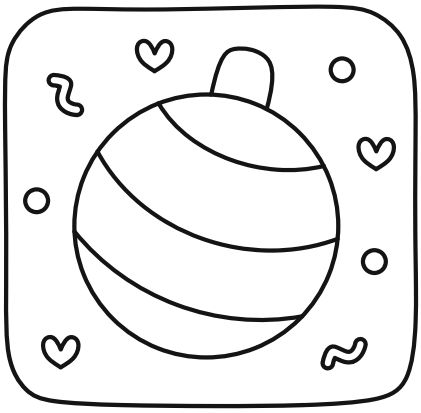
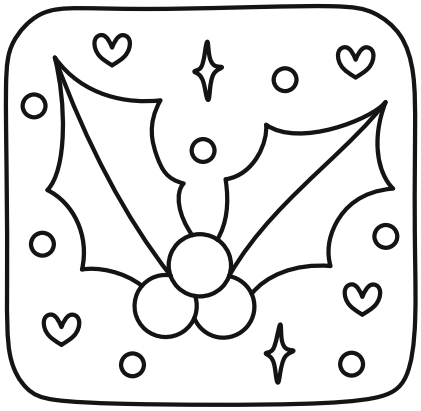
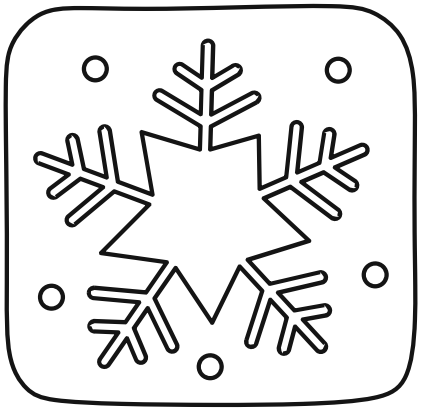
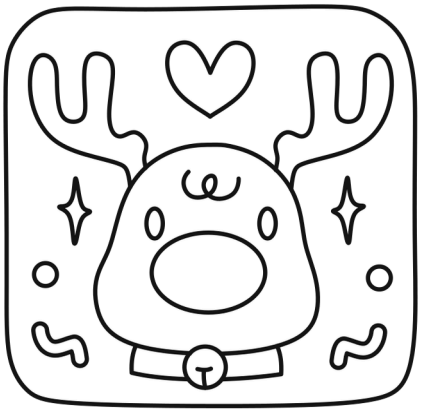
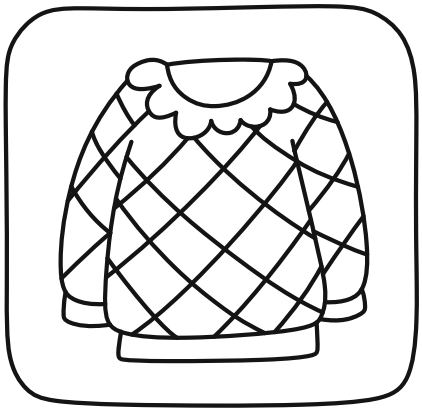
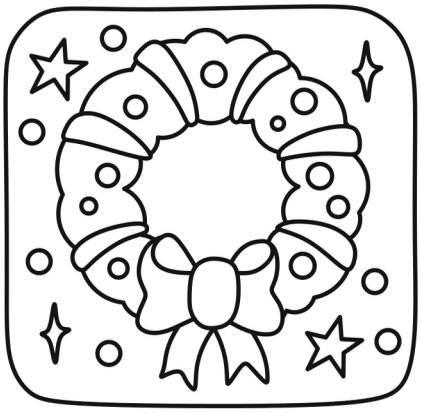
The Gift of Joy Week-cont.

The many symbols on our Christmas tree:

1. The **evergreen tree** itself always stays green, even in winter. A reminder that Jesus still lives, always present.
2. The **lights** remind us that Jesus is our light that shows us the way.
3. **Snowflakes** are all different, just like humans. God made each person different, each special to God, each one of a kind!
4. An **angel** told Mary she was going to have a baby and that she should name him Jesus. An angel visited the shepherds in the fields, told them where they could find the newborn baby Jesus.
5. **Candy canes** look like the stick shepherds used as they took care of their sheep. Jesus is known as our Good Shepherd.
6. **Bells** make beautiful sounds. People make happy sounds when they sing songs to Jesus, especially at Christmas time.
7. **Ball ornament's** different colors remind us of the beautiful world God created.
8. **Different colors** on the tree make it beautiful. God made God's world beautiful by creating people with different colors of skin.
9. The wise men followed the **bright star** in the east until it stopped over the place where they found Jesus.
10. God gave us the first **Christmas gift**, God's Son, Jesus. This was God's way of showing us His love.







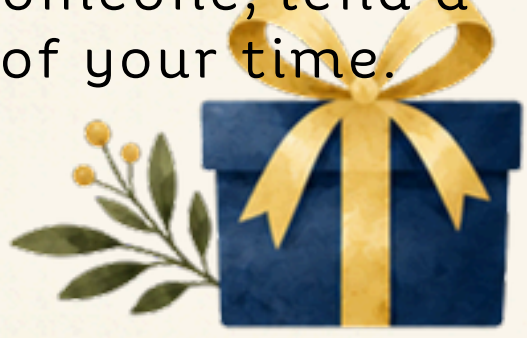
Love

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38
When the angel visited Mary, she didn't know exactly what the future would hold. But she trusted God and said yes. Through the birth of Jesus, we are reminded of God's amazing love for all people.

Unwrapping the gift:

1. Mary showed her love and trust in God by saying yes, even when she didn't have all the answers. How can we show our love for God through the choices we make each day?
2. Jesus is God's gift of love to the world. How can we share that love with someone who may feel forgotten, lonely, or left out this Christmas?

Carry the Gift: Choose one intentional act of love this week. Reach out to someone, lend a helping hand, or give the gift of your time.



The Gift of Love Week

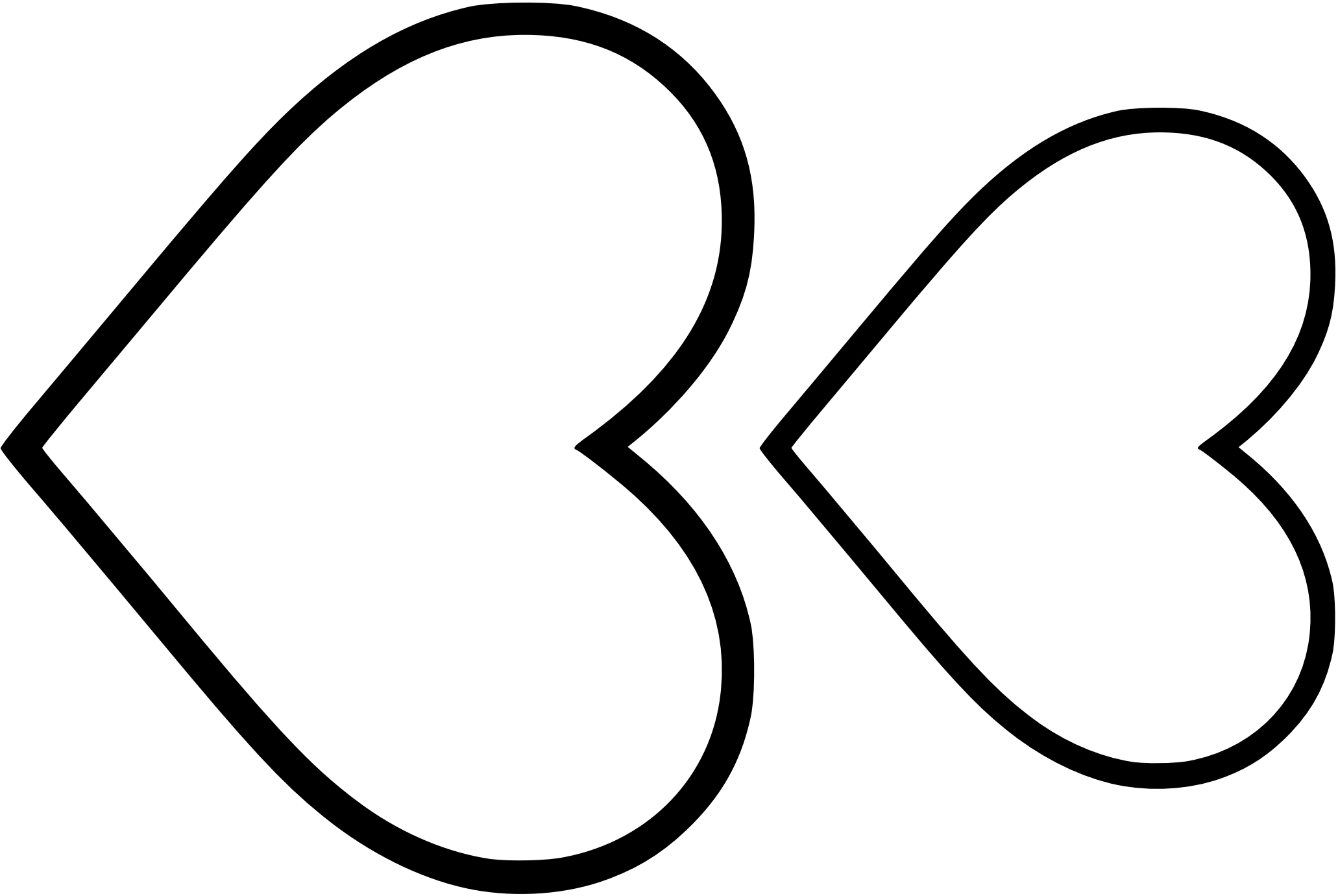
Love: a strong affection for, or attachment to, a person or persons; the feeling of benevolence or brotherhood that people should have for each other.

- When we think of love during this Advent season, we remember God's great love for humanity. God sent God's own son, Jesus, to teach us how to love one another and ultimately give his own life for our sake. (That becomes our Easter story.)

- This week we will make a heart ornament. It can be hung on your family Christmas tree, your special tree representing joy, or hung around the house as a reminder to share God's love, your love, with others. You might even want to give these "gifts of love" to special people in your life or people who might otherwise be forgotten during the holidays. Let them know they are loved.



Make as many copies of this page as needed. Create your heart ornament any way you would like to.



Epiphany

the gift of Light

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12
The Wise Men followed a star that led them to Jesus. They brought gifts to honor Him, but the greatest gift they discovered was Jesus Himself! Epiphany reminds us that God's light is for everyone and that we are called to carry that light into the world.

Unwrapping the gift:

1. The Wise Men followed the star, trusting that it would lead them to something wonderful. What helps guide you toward Jesus in your everyday life? How can you be a light that helps others find Him?
2. The Wise Men brought gifts to Jesus and returned home by a different road. How might encountering Jesus change the way we live? What gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love can we carry into the new year?

Carry the Gift: Just as the star guided the Wise Men, you can be a light for someone else! This week, choose one way to brighten someone's day. Share kindness, offer encouragement, help someone in need, or invite someone to join you in serving others.



The Gift of Light

We are all meant to bring the light to others, the story of God's love for us all. January 6 is the day we celebrate the Wise Men's visit to Jesus. This is when Jesus is recognized as the great Messiah that has been long awaited, the ultimate light for God's people.

- During the time from Christmas to January 6 revisit your stars and the many places you saw or experienced God throughout the Advent season.

- Share your stars with each other. How did you know that was a "God moment"? What made it so special?

- Pick several stars and make a collage out of them. You might want to put them in a frame, to bring out in future Advent seasons or place in a dominant place in your house as a reminder of God's presence.

- You could also make a chain of your stars. You might use this on your Christmas tree next year or use it as a decoration in the house. Again, a reminder of the many "God moments" you experienced. You might even add stars throughout the new year, continuing to look for "God moments" in your daily lives.



OUTREACH IDEAS & SUGGESTIONS

1. As a family, bake and decorate cookies for delivery to others. Feel free to purchase already made ready to decorate, dough. Time spent together is the focus as you make your outreach gifts.
2. Visit a local nursing home. Especially visit with someone who doesn't get visitors or gifts. Remember staff as well as residents.
3. Many in the community around us have no idea why Christians celebrate Christmas. Create an item that includes the story of Christmas that you can give people as a teaching moment.
4. Send an uplifting card to a friend, family member or homebound person. You might even deliver holiday cards to hospital patients. If there is time, and a desire, make your own cards.
5. Make a phone call to someone you haven't seen or spoken to in awhile.
6. Obtain a bag of individually wrapped candy. Carry with you throughout the holiday, giving randomly to those you encounter.
7. Connect with what your local church is doing and participate.
8. Volunteer within community homes/organizations.
9. Decorate and deliver a small Christmas tree to an elderly neighbor or family member. This might be the only decoration they have for the holidays. (See "The Gift of Joy Week".)
10. Create simple tic-tac-toe boards to distribute on your visits. Use a heavy cardboard base and design simple holiday figures as the markers.
11. Decorate small jars and fill with candy or trail mix for delivery to others. This might be good for staff at a local nursing home or hospital.
12. And/or participate in the Reverse Advent Calendar. Instructions are included in this packet.

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX. ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A FOOD BANK, PANTRY OR FAMILY IN NEED.

DECEMBER 1 BOX OF CEREAL
DECEMBER 2 PEANUT BUTTER
DECEMBER 3 STUFFING MIX
DECEMBER 4 BOXED POTATOES
DECEMBER 5 MACARONI AND CHEESE
DECEMBER 6 CANNED FRUIT
DECEMBER 7 CANNED TOMATOES
DECEMBER 8 CANNED TUNA
DECEMBER 9 DESSERT MIX
DECEMBER 10 JAR OF APPLESAUCE
DECEMBER 11 CANNED SWEET POTATOES
DECEMBER 12 CRANBERRY SAUCE
DECEMBER 13 CANNED BEANS
DECEMBER 14 BOX OF CRACKERS
DECEMBER 15 PACKAGE OF RICE
DECEMBER 16 PACKAGE OF OATMEAL
DECEMBER 17 PACKAGE OF PASTA
DECEMBER 18 SPAGHETTI SAUCE
DECEMBER 19 CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP
DECEMBER 20 TOMATO SOUP
DECEMBER 21 CAN CORN
DECEMBER 22 CAN MIXED VEGETABLES
DECEMBER 23 CAN CARROTS
DECEMBER 24 CAN GREEN BEANS