

Sunday School Home Activities - Week of December 20, 2020



Weekly home activities, great for the whole family, are designed to guide children from Nursery thru 5th grade and their families in Bible stories, engaging experiences, spiritual practices, and opportunities for reflection. Pick one to two activities to do with your family each week. Contact Kathy Schmucker, Spiritual Formation Director, for more information. kschmucker@faithumchurch.org

Welcome to Wonder

Prepare Ahead: As a family, create a Wonder Table. Find a small table or area in your home. On the table place a candle, a plant or flower, and any other special items you want to include. This may be the space you decide to place an Advent Wreath or Advent Candles. Use this space while gathering as a family to engage in the lesson or watch Worship by Wire together.

Wonder with Me

READ the Bible Story - Read the Bible story, Luke 2:1-7

- Roll the Wonder Cube. Take time to answer a few of the questions. *A copy of the Wonder Cube for this quarter can be found in the December 6 Sunday School home activities or printed in the Advent Kit.*



WATCH the Bible Story and Sing with the Celebrate Wonder Music Videos

Watch this week's Celebrate Wonder Video on Amplify Media:

Amplify Media is a new resource for our congregation! This will make it easy for you and your families to access 100's of videos for adults, youth and children. To receive the log in info and our congregation's access code, email kschmucker@faithumchurch.org or text Kathy at 330-224-6138. Once you have logged into Amplify Media search Celebrate Wonder to watch this week's Celebrate Wonder Video and view the Celebrate Wonder Music Videos! Amplify Media has also recently added a section called, Cokesbury Kids, to make it easier for you to find all the great resources available for children!

This week is Winter Session 3 Jesus Brings Joy.

WONDER: What brings you joy?

WONDER together

- How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they couldn't find a place to stay?
- What do you think it would be like to stay in a place where animals are kept? What do you think Mary and Joseph felt when Jesus was born?
- What do you think it was like to travel in Mary and Joseph's time? Have you ever spent the night in an unusual place?
- How does Jesus bring you joy?

PRAY together - Dear God, help me be full of joy. Amen.



SHARE the Faith Word:

JOY – The definition of *joy* is a feeling of gratitude and happiness. Gratitude is another word for being thankful. Joy makes us want to celebrate!

WONDER: What makes you want to celebrate?

Experience Wonder—Create a Space for Jesus (Art)

Supplies: pictures of diverse manger scenes; recycled materials, such as plastic containers, bottles, aluminum cans, paper, and so forth. You might also include other craft supplies, such as craft sticks, chenille stems, and so forth.

Together, look at pictures of different manger scenes.

SAY: In our Bible story today, Jesus was born in an unexpected place.

WONDER: What do you think it might have looked like? smelled like?

SAY: Using the materials gathered, re-create the manger scene. Be creative!

Text or email a picture of your nativity scene to Kathy Schmucker at 330-224-6138 or kschmucker@faithumchurch.org.

Spiritual Practice—Exploring Joy Through Celebration

SAY: Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent. We will light the next candle on our Advent wreath.

- Invite someone to color or help you light one of the purple candles on the wreath.

SAY: One of the ways we celebrate at Christmas is by giving gifts to one another. We do this as a reminder that God gave us the greatest gift of all, baby Jesus. Today let's think of ways we can bless someone in our community. Let's say a blessing over the gifts we will give this year.

PRAY: God, we thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus. We pray the gifts that we've prepared for each other and for people in our community will be a blessing to them and their families. Amen.



Spiritual Practice – Advent Wreath Devotion

When we least expect it, joy can appear! In the midst of chaos, God may bring a reminder that joy is just ahead. Jesus brought joy in the midst of chaos.

As you light the candles on your Advent wreath, read Luke 2:1-7. Gather around the wreath and sing Christmas songs of joy. Welcome baby Jesus! Sing songs of joy to the baby Jesus as you go throughout this week. Jesus brings joy!

Celebration Chart

Print out and place the chart on your refrigerator, kitchen table, or in an easy-to-access place. Throughout the week, have your child mark a space each time he or she completes an item on the chart. When a vertical, horizontal, or diagonal line is completed, celebrate together! A *Celebration Chart for Winter* can be found in the *December 6 Sunday School Activities* or in the *Advent Kit*.

Adapted from Celebrate Wonder Winter 2020 Session 1 © 2020 Cokesbury



Additional Family Activities:

- **Advent Activities:**



- **Advent Kit** – Faith United’s Spiritual Formation Ministry Team has created Advent Kits for our congregation. If you haven’t yet received one, you can pick up a kit at the church in the Gathering Area. Each kit contains Advent candles, an Advent calendar, coloring activities and Advent and Christmas reflection and coloring resources for all ages. You and your family can create your own nativity and Advent wreath!

- **Chrismon Ornaments** – Chrismons are Christmas tree decorations that teach the word of God. The word Chrismon is the combination of two words, *Christ* and *monogram* (an initial or symbol that represents an individual). Chrismons tell the story of Christ through the use of ancient Christian symbols that date back to the origin of the church in the first century AD. A Chrismon tree is decorated with symbols or monograms about Jesus Christ, our Savior. The evergreen tree symbolizes eternal life. The white lights used to decorate the tree represent Jesus, the Light of the World. Chrismon ornaments are white and gold symbolizing the purity, perfection, majesty and glory of Christ. Learn more here - <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-are-chrismons>



- **Advent Wreath** - The tradition of lighting the candles on the Advent Wreath is a favorite element of worship that symbolizes the passage of the four weeks of Advent and the celebration of the Christ Child on Christmas Eve. Advent wreaths are usually circular representing God’s never-ending love. At Faith United we use 3 purple candles and 1 pink for the four weeks of Advent. The pink candle is lit on the third week as a symbol of joy. The white candle is the Christ Candle and will be lit on Christmas Eve. Some traditions use 4 blue candles and 1 white. The Advent Wreath is a tradition you can also use at home by making your own wreath! You can use garland, branches from you yard, clay or other art materials to form your wreath. Reading a scripture and reflection question can add to your personal or family devotion experience.
- **Share Christ’s Love, Doing for Others** – As a family, consider ways that you can honor Jesus by doing something for others during the season of Advent and Christmas. Read the church newsletter, The Navigator, or visit the church website for some suggestions. Check out the book, The Sparkle Box, which tells the story of a family’s tradition to honor Jesus by helping others. Write down acts of kindness and love on a piece of paper and place in a special box or jar. On Christmas day, take turns reading about all the acts of kindness and sharing given in honor of Jesus. The Advent Calendar in this year’s Advent Kits also have some great ideas!
- **Story Time** - Story telling is a beautiful art. It’s a creative way to pass down family tales and share stories with your family and friends. Try reading a story each day leading up to Christmas. Make this story time special, remembering the words of Psalm 78:4, “...we will tell the next generation the praise worthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.”
 - Tell your children and grandchildren, nieces or nephews your favorite Bible verse and why this passage of scripture has special meaning for you. Take turns reading your favorite Bible stories or talking about your favorite Bible characters. What special quality makes those biblical characters stand out for you? Which Bible character would you want to be like? Ask each other to share which character you see reflected in each other’s lives. Share how you see Jesus in each other. Talk about how God has blessed your family and friends during the past year. End with prayer asking God to help each of you grow in your understanding of how His story is the greatest story ever told!
 - Relive the memories of Christmas past by reflecting on your most memorable Christmas moment or a favorite Christmas tradition. Begin by sharing the story of Christ’ birth. Read Luke 2:1-20 as a family. Take turns reading the verses. Be creative in the way you tell the story. For fun, get out the bathrobes, sheets, and towels, put on costumes and act out the story. Put yourselves in the story. What would it have been like if you had been one of the shepherds, the inn keeper, or the wise men? Share how Jesus makes a difference in your lives.



- **Advent Calendars** - An Advent Calendar is another wonderful way to experience the season of Advent. A calendar can help us count down to the celebration of Christ's birth and encourage simple daily activities during this time of waiting and watching for Christ. Daily activities include doing something for others, learning about the symbols of the season, prayers, scripture reading, etc. Faith United is providing 2 calendars for you to choose from. A printed copy of one was included in the Advent Kit. Digital links for both are available in the December 5 Navigator email or email Kathy at kschmucker@faithumchurch.org and I will email them to you.
- **Advent Prayer Beads** - Prayer beads are a set of beads designed to help people pray. Prayer beads give you something to hold on to and help you focus as you pray. Check out this link about Advent beads that were created to tell the story of the greatest gift ever given, God's gift of Jesus to us! They are a tool all ages can use to guide your prayers during the season of Advent. Learn more here:
<https://faithumchurch.wordpress.com/2012/12/07/advent-prayer-beads/>
- **Snowflakes** - No two snowflakes are the same. Each one is beautiful. Together with other snowflakes, they can create a beautiful scene. Using paper – white or any color you choose – make your own snowflakes of different sizes, shapes, and designs. Hang them up in windows or around the house. See how they can bring beauty wherever they are. Thank God for the beauty of all creation; for the details in something as tiny and ornate as a snowflake and as majestic as a mountain! Celebrate the joy in all creation!
- **Advent Walk** - Take a walk outside – either in a park or in neighborhood. Look around at God's handiwork in nature. Is it cold or warm? Is the sun shining? Notice things around you. As Mary and Joseph walked to Bethlehem, what do you think they noticed as they journeyed? As you walk this Advent, prayerfully reflect on Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem anticipating the birth of Christ. How long might it take to walk this 70 mile journey during Advent? How might reflecting on this walk help you to experience the coming of Christ this Advent?
- **Stargazing** – Take a drive on a clear night and enjoy some of the Christmas lights around your neighborhood. End the evening by spending some time exploring the night sky, one of God's most beautiful creations. Dress warm and bring along some blankets and hot cocoa as it may take a half an hour for your eyes to fully adjust to the dark so you'll see the most stars. While gazing at the stars, try some of these suggested discussion questions:
 - What helps you to find your way in the dark?
 - Can you count the number of stars that you see?
 - What do you notice about the moon?

Share your hopes and dreams with each other as you gaze at the night sky. How does it feel to know that God who created the galaxies and placed each star in the sky knows all about you, even the number of hairs on your head? Read Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2: 1-20, Isaiah 9:2-6.

What stirs in your heart as you read of the wonder of Jesus' birth under the night sky? Imagine what it would have been like to have been one of those shepherds. How might you have reacted to the angel's message? What does it mean that Jesus is Immanuel, God with us? How does Jesus help you to find your way in a darkened world? What dreams is God stirring in your heart? Close in prayer under the night sky.
- **Resources for Talking about Race and Racism with Children:** Visit our website at <https://www.myfaithunited.org/anti-racism/>
- **Look for God Sightings**, looking for our good God in the world! Share the God Sightings you find with us. <https://www.myfaithunited.org/god-sightings-looking-for-hope-during-the-pandemic/>
- Use, individually or as a family, the worship and devotional resources you will receive connected with Sunday's Worship by Wire and Wednesday Night Faith Connections and Sunday School. Share with others! Visit our website for updated resources: <https://www.myfaithunited.org/worship-by-wire/>

