He is Coming...

Preparing for the Greatest Gift of all

Advent 2016

To: You
From: God

PREPARING FOR THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL
Dear Mom and Dad,

The Christian family is the “incubator” of faith within a home. There’s no better place to grow the love of Christ within our children. This advent booklet presents an excellent way to encourage just that. It’s been lovingly and creatively put together - all it needs is a mom, a dad or grandparent to put it into service!

As we make our way into a new Christian year, I invite you to be evaluative in considering the following questions:

- What distinguishes your family as a “Christian” family?
- What marks your spiritual leadership within the family?
- How have you been intentional about your role in leading your children to the love and service of Christ?

I’m so grateful to be a part of a Christian community that encourages parents to be thoughtful and intentional about leading their children into a relationship with the Lord of Christmas!

My prayers join many as you have fun within your family - learning and growing in faith together!

James D. Miller

Pastor
Dear First Church Families:

The season of Advent is here and is beckoning to us, holding within itself the “Promise of Love” that is waiting to unfold. Advent can become a very important tradition in your family and First Church wants to help! This year Advent begins on November 27 and ends on December 24, Christmas Eve.

Our prayer for you this season is that you’ll make Advent a special family time and plan to celebrate together weekly. This booklet will help you to do just that very thing! As a family, enter these pages and enjoy Advent together. Take time to pray, to sing, to listen, to play and to love one another. Let the greatest gift you give one another this year be “time together”.

The 2016 version of the “He Is Coming” Family Devotional will give you lots of ideas of how you can incorporate Advent into your family traditions, sharing the excitement and anticipation of the celebration of Jesus’ birth.

Blessings!

Jan, Amy & Kim
Calendar of Events

• Every Sunday in Advent, Nov. 27 - Dec. 18:
  Worship Services: 8 am, Traditional; Kerr Chapel
  8:30 am Contemporary; Stephenson Hall
  11:00 am, Sanctuary, Great Hall, Bernsen (TIF), Stephenson Hall

• Sunday, December 4
  All Church Chili Lunch: 12:30 in the Atrium &
  Advent Workshop: 1:00 - 3:30 pm, Powerhouse

• Saturday, December 10
  Downtown Christmas Parade followed by Carols
  and Coco at the church. 6:00 pm

• Sunday, December 18
  Christmas Music Sunday: in all regular worship
  services

• Saturday, December 24
  Christmas Eve Worship: 3:30 pm, Children’s Live
  Nativity 5:00 pm, 7:30 pm, 10:30 pm, Sanctuary

• Sunday, December 25: Christmas Day Worship
  One service at 11 am, Sanctuary

• Sunday, January 1:
  Pancakes at 9:30 am and worship at 11 am
  *No Sunday School Classes at 9:30 am
  Childcare and K2Quest at 11 am*
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The first and most important thing we can do to prepare our children for Advent is to prepare ourselves first. After all, if we are impatient and crabby - pressured by all the busyness of this season - we won’t be very good at teaching our children anything about quiet, expectant waiting. If they never hear us talk about what we long for from the Lord, how will they learn about this kind of longing? And, if they hear “the coming of Jesus” talked about at church, and perhaps at school, but never hear us talk about the meaning of the coming of Jesus for us, what kind of message will we be giving them?

Of course, our children will be watching us and listening to us - what we say and do, and what we fail to say and do. So, the first thing we can give our children is our own commitment to enter Advent as deeply as we can. We want to clear our own spirits so that we can be present to theirs. The graces we receive can be the graces we share with them.

**What are the key first steps to enter into Advent?**

We can all slow down. We can all breathe more deeply. We can all begin to trust that this will be a blessed time. Then, when we let ourselves be who we are, and hear the Scriptures, we can begin to quietly pray, “Come, Lord, Jesus.” We might expand that prayer, in quiet moments of our days ahead, “Come into my life. I trust you don’t mind if it is still messy. I believe you love me, because I need your love. I believe you can find the way to my heart. Come and fill me with peace and the love only you can give.” Some of us will want to open our hands on our laps or hold up our arms and say out loud, “Come, Lord, Jesus, come into this house, into my family, into our struggles. Come and heal us, and give us joy again. Come and unite us and let us experience, each in our own way, a bit of the joy you are offering me now.”

And, before a single decoration goes up, we have prepared for Christmas’ message with the foundation of faith, with the mystery of Advent’s gift. God wants to be with us. Advent is letting God’s will be done in our hearts and in our everyday lives.
The Advent Wreath is a Christmas tradition that found its start in Germany. Households had evergreen wreaths with four candles that symbolized the birth of Jesus. Now Advent Wreaths are commonplace in both homes and churches.

The Meaning of the Wreath and Candles

As with any religious tradition, Advent Wreaths are symbolic in nature. The wreaths are circular, symbolizing the never-ending love of God. Evergreens are frequently used because the color green represents new life. Each candle also has a symbolic meaning, in addition to their use as a marker of time.

- Week 1 - Purple Candle: Hope
- Week 2 - Purple Candle: Love
- Week 3 - Pink Candle: Joy
- Week 4 - Purple Candle: Peace

Why the pink candle? It comes from the Catholic Church, who considers Advent to be a solemn time, much like Lent. Ergo, the liturgical color for Advent was purple, the same as in Lent. However, the third Sunday of Advent was known as Gaudete Sunday (Gaudete is Latin for “rejoice”), and the priest wore pink vestments. So the colors of the Advent Wreath are also based upon the Roman Catholic liturgical colors for the season.

Read more: http://www.doityourself.com/stry/advent-wreath#ixzz14uHFqaZL
How to Use Your Advent Wreath

The idea is to use the wreath in conjunction with worship services or family devotions on the four Sundays in Advent. You light candles at the beginning of each service and blow them out at the end.

• On the first Sunday in Advent, you light the first candle. Have your service, then blow out the candle.

• On the second Sunday in Advent, you light two candles, first the one from the previous Sunday, then the second one. Have your service, then blow out the candles.

• On the third Sunday in Advent, you light the two candles from the previous weeks, in the order you lit them before, then you add the third one. Have your service, then blow out the candles.

• On the fourth Sunday in Advent, you light the three candles from the previous weeks, in the order you lit them before, then you light the fourth one. Have your service, then blow out the candles. You should get a stair-step effect, since each candle is a different length by now.

• On Christmas Eve, you light the four candles in the order you lit them before, and then you light the center candle. Have your service, and then blow out the candles.

Information copied from: Kencollins.com
First Advent Candle (purple)

Light the first candle as the family says together:
We light the first purple candle on the Advent wreath—the HOPE candle.

A child asks: “Why do we light one candle?”

A parent responds: “This candle reminds us that hope is the belief that Christmas is only the beginning.

From your Bible read Isaiah 7:14

Devotion: This is the first Sunday of Advent. We’re gathered here to think about Jesus and His coming into our world. Jesus is like a light that shines on us and shows us the way out of darkness. Jesus’ teachings are like a light to show us the way to live. We want to get ourselves ready for Jesus to come into our lives, into our hearts this Christmas. ASK: What are some special things we can do to get ready for Christmas? How can we be a light to others?

Sing: O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

O Come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!
O Come, thou Wisdom from on high,
Who ord’rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Prayer:
Dear God, our world is in darkness. We need the light of peace and love to shine in our world. Help us to prepare our lives and our homes to receive the One who said, “I am the Light of the world.” We pray in the name of Christ our Lord, Amen
Second Advent Candle (purple)

Light two candles as the family says together:
We light the 2nd candle of the Advent Wreath—the Peace candle

A child asks: “Why do we light two candles?”

A parent responds: “The first candle reminds us of the light of hope of the prophets. The candle we light today is a reminder of the preparation that was made for the coming of the Savior Jesus. The promise of God made it clear just exactly where Jesus would be born.

Read from your Bible Luke 3:4-6

Devotion: This is the second Sunday of Advent. Today we remember that Mary and Joseph went on a journey to Bethlehem. We, too, are on our own journey. We travel toward Christmas and the birth of Jesus because we want to know Him better, to feel His love, to see His face in our life today.

Sing: O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

O Little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in the dark street shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.
For Christ is born of Mary and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth;
And praises sing to God our King, and peace to men on earth!

Prayer:
Dear God, Thank you for the donkey that carried Mary and for the animals that greeted them in Bethlehem. We thank you that Mary and Joseph were able to find a place to deliver Baby Jesus. Amen
Third Advent Candle (pink)

Light three candles as the family says together: We light the first, second and third candle today—the candle of joy.”

A child asks: “Why do we light three candles?”

A parent responds: “The first candle is a reminder of the light of hope of the prophets. The second candle is a symbol of the preparation that was made for the coming of Jesus. The third candle represents the joy that was present when the angels proclaimed Jesus’ birth!


Devotion: Today is the third Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of joy. A young Mary had every reason to fear but instead, expressed joy in God’s favor. The angels comforted the frightened shepherds on a dark hillside with the joy of the Good News! The joy we find is never in our circumstances but in our relationship with God in Christ. What can we do to show we have joy in Jesus?

Sing: THE FIRST NOEL

The first Noel, the angels did say,  
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
In the fields where they lay keeping their sheep  
On a cold winter’s night that was so deep.  
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!  
Born is the King of Israel!

Prayer:

Dear God, We too rejoice! We rejoice that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. We rejoice that You give us what we need. Fill our days with joy and help us to share that joy with others. Amen.
Fourth Advent Candle (purple)

Light four candles as the family says together: “We light the first, second, third and fourth candle today—the candle of love.”

**A child asks:** “Why do we light four candles?”

**A parent responds:** “The first candle is a reminder of the light of hope of the prophets. The second candle is a symbol of the preparation that was made for the coming of Jesus. The third candle represents the joy that was present when the angels proclaimed Jesus’ birth. The circle of light is almost complete. The waiting is almost over. The fourth candle represents love.

**Read from your Bible: John 3:16-17**

**Devotion:** Mary and Joseph are in the stable. Angels have told the shepherds where to look for them. They know that it is God who has given them the news and sends them to Bethlehem. While we have been preparing our hearts for Christmas, God has been leading us, guiding us to the true meaning of Christmas~that He has come into the world in Jesus to be with us~to be close to us. God will help us to see and to hear what we need to see and hear this Christmas!

Suppose you were one of those shepherds, how would you have responded??

**Sing:**

*We Three Kings*

We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar.
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.
O Star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright.
Westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.

**Prayer:**

Dear God, help us to wait for what You will show us this Advent. Help us to see that You are with us. Guide us by your Holy Light to that place where we take Jesus into our hearts. Help us to notice those around us who may be bearers of your Light to us. Help us to be the bearer of your Good News to others. Amen
Lighting the Christ Candle (white)

Light four candles and a special “Christ candle” as the family says together:

“Jesus said, “I am the light of the world, he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Read the Christmas message:  Luke 2:1-11

Devotion:  Today we celebrate the birth of Jesus. And we remember that the reason Jesus came as a baby, was so He could grow up and become a man. And as a man, He would live a perfect life for us and He would die on the cross for our sins. Then He would rise from the dead and ascend to the right of God the Father. That’s why Jesus came. He came to save you and me! He came to be the Hero of God’s story. And now we wait for Jesus to come back again, because He promised He would. How do you fit in to God’s story?

Sing:  O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

Oh come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
Come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels!
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

Prayer:
Dear God, help us to see where we fit in to Your story. Help us to spread Your love and joy in the world by the way that we live, the way that we act and by the words that we say. Be with us always, today and forever more. Amen
HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS
### Other Passages Of Scripture

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<td>About love</td>
<td>Matthew 22:34-40, 1 Cor. 13, 1 John 4:4-12</td>
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<td>John 3:16, Matthew 7:7-12, Mark 12:35-44, 11 Cor. 9:1-15</td>
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<td>About Jesus</td>
<td>Matthew 28:18-21, Acts 2, Ephesians 4:1-7; 11-13, 1 Peter 2:1-17</td>
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Here is a list of fun Advent activities to do with your children. Pick one a day!

1. In The Kitchen:
   - Gingerbread cookies (surprise a neighbor or two with a plate)
   - Make Christmas candy~fudge and divinity are nice!!
   - Decorate Gingerbread houses/or make a house out of graham crackers
   - Decorate upside-down sugar ice cream cones; makes cute trees to go outside the Gingerbread Houses

2. Holiday Outings:
   - Take a drive to see all the Christmas lights (with Hot Chocolate). Bring a treat for the “Best Christmas Lights” house
   - Go to the Festival of Trees at Philbrook
   - Visit Utica Square to see all the lights
   - Attend a Christmas concert

3. At Home:
   - Enjoy a bubble bath with Christmas confetti
   - Take a bath with red and green glow sticks
   - Host a Christmas party
   - Host a cookie exchange
   - Sing Christmas carols together
   - Watch a festive movie together: Elf or How The Grinch Stole Christmas
   - Play a game in front of the fire
   - Send Christmas Cards
   - Have an inside picnic

4. When It Snows:
   - Build a snowman
   - Go sledding!
   - Make snow ice cream

5. The Christmas Spirit:
   - Help with a Christmas service project as a family
   - Act out the nativity scene
   - Attend the Christmas Eve service
   - Pick an angel off the “Angel Tree” to sponsor
   - Participate in FPC’s “Gift Back” Project
   - Read the Christmas Story in the Bible (in Luke) to remind us of the true reason for Christmas.
Mitten Clips

These mittens won’t warm chilled hands, but they will generate good cheer when clipped to gift tags.

Instructions:

Cut a mitten shape from cardboard, and trace it onto a piece of felt. Cut along the lines, and glue the felt to the cardboard with clear-drying white craft glue. Adorn the felt side of the mitten with bits of felt in complementary colors -- dots made with a hole punch, a monogram, felt trim edged with decorative shears, or a Christmas tree cut out with a decorative craft punch. Glue a standard wooden clothespin to cardboard, then glue a magnet to the back of the clothespin. After the gifts have been opened, use your mittens to display greeting cards on the refrigerator.
Tooth Pick Ornament

For ages 5 - old age.

Materials

• A box of rounded tooth picks
• Scissors
• Pencil
• White glue
• Old Christmas cards
• 1 sheet of cardboard
• Spool of thread

Directions

1. Cut out a square of cardboard 2 1/4” x 2 1/4” - this will be your stencil
2. Pick out a favorite Christmas Card and position your stencil over the area you want to cut out.
3. Trace around the stencil
4. Cut out on the lines
5. Put a small amount of glue around the edges of the cutout Christmas card
6. Begin placing toothpicks by 3’s or 2’s, first on one edge then the next until all 4 sides make a frame.
7. Place a “roof” at the top of the frame.
8. Allow the glue to dry
9. When glue is dry take a length of thread, double it and tie it to the top of the roof.
10. Make the loop long enough to fit on the branch of a Christmas tree.
Paper Reindeer

Another easy-to-make craft for small children.

Supplies
• Dark Brown construction paper
• Light Brown construction paper
• Large googly eyes from a craft store
• Small red pompoms

Instructions

1. Trace Child’s shoe on dark construction paper and cut out to make head.
2. Trace child’s hands on light construction paper and cut out to make antlers
3. Glue antlers, eyes, and pompom (nose) to head
Puzzle Wreath

- 36 puzzle pieces from a used jigsaw puzzle
- Green high gloss acrylic or lacquer spray paint
- Small jar of high gloss red acrylic paint
- Small round paint brush
- Newspaper
- Glue
- Red ribbon
- Gold braid string

1. Lay out the puzzle pieces on newspaper. Spray paint the pieces with the green paint.
2. Apply 3 coats allowing each coat to dry the prescribed time listed on the can.
3. Next lay out a ring of 9 pieces (painted side up) making sure that each piece is touching the other then make another layer gluing 9 pieces on top of the first nine staggering them so that each top piece is overlapping two of the bottom pieces. (See photo)
4. Continue the process until there are 4 layers of 9 pieces. Allow the construction to dry overnight (if you are using a glue gun you can continue with next step after the glue has cooled)
5. With your red paint, dab three little dots of color in bunches around the wreath to make it appear that the wreath has berries. (See photo)
6. Attach red ribbon with glue
7. Tie gold string to top of ornament and hang
Memories Made

Write down some of your favorite memories or quotes shared by your family this season.
Unwrapping the Gift

There are three ways you can respond when offered a gift.

• You can reject the gift completely

• You can take the gift with a smile, but leave it on the shelf, where you look at it from time to time, but you don’t really take it out of the box and explore it in detail, or

• You can unwrap the gift, learn all about it, use it every day and let it impact your life in every way?

Jesus gives us the gift of himself.

How do you choose to respond to this greatest gift?