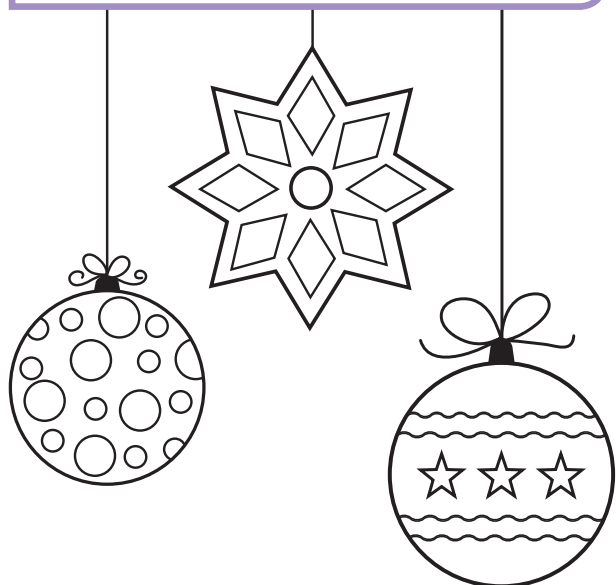


# Advent Family Sheet

Here are some ideas that you can use as a family to make Advent a special time of preparation and expectation for what is to come at Christmas – alongside being a time for pre-Christmas shopping and parties!

Each of the four sections is linked to one of the Sundays in Advent – either to its theme or Gospel reading – but they can be used in a variety of different ways and contexts. For example, time could be set aside once a week for the family to come together to explore the ideas, or they could be part of a daily routine at, say, a mealtime. Use them as best suits your family and circumstances.



## Advent 1 2–8 December 2018

*By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness (Luke 1.78-79a).*

Light is a powerful symbol, especially at this time of year. Its coming and going marks the passage of time. It is also a sign of hope; for Christians it speaks of the coming of Christ, the light of the world.



### Advent candles

#### Do

Make time each day of Advent (or just this first week) to light a candle. You could use an Advent wreath, or light candles or tealights before a family meal. You could link this with a chocolate Advent calendar – light a candle and eat a chocolate!

#### Reflect

Use the opportunity to reflect on significant moments in your life – or ‘hinges’ in time – that have particular meaning for you and signalled a change or an opportunity. Just one or two each day will build to a significant story over the course of Advent. Not every moment will necessarily be happy, some may mark loss, adversity or pain.

#### Talk

As you note all of these ‘hinge’ moments, how do you respond – with thanks? ... with sadness? ... with forgiveness? Do you recognise the presence of God in any of these moments? Discuss these questions together.

#### Pray

God of past, present and future, be the light which guides us on our journeys, which illuminates our understanding, and which shines through us as a beacon of hope for others.  
**Amen.**



## Advent 2 9–15 December 2018

*Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight... and all flesh shall see the salvation of God (Luke 3.4b,6).*

Writing Christmas cards (or sending Christmas emails) reminds us of those whose paths have crossed ours at an earlier time in our lives.

### A network of greeting

#### Do

Use a map to mark all the places where you will be sending greetings this Christmas. You could use pins and threads of different colours to link your location to those of family and friends who will receive your greetings; the resulting network of contacts is a physical representation of love, remembrance and value.

#### Connect

How could you make new connections during Advent?

If you use social media, use it to spread positive messages to a wider audience. Could you send cards or messages to victims of injustice through Amnesty International, to refugees far from home, or to fellow Christians elsewhere in the world?



#### Pray

God of the journey, we thank you for the network of relationships we treasure at this time of year. Give us hearts to send your love ever wider into the world, taking our small part in helping ‘all people to see the salvation of God’.  
**Amen.**

## Advent 3 16–22 December 2018

*And the crowds asked him 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise' (Luke 3.10-11).*

All the activities of the Christmas period can be a wonderful expression of the deep connection, love and celebration we share with others. But at times, many of us also find the expectations of lavish spending and overindulgence to be distractions and burdens.

### The alternative Christmas

#### Do

As an antidote to seasonal excess, write an alternative 'wish list' of things you would like to do, or contribute towards, to respond to Christ's presence in the world. You could do this individually and then share your lists with each other. Or together you could create a family list. This could form the basis for New Year resolutions.

Alternatively – or in addition – if you buy gifts, could you consider the alternative gift ranges offered by many charities? If you cook, could you contribute to a Christmas meal for the lonely or homeless in your community? If you attend school or community events, can you invite elderly, isolated or lonely neighbours to join you, or organise to go carol singing and instead of collecting money, give out chocolates with a Christmas greeting to those you visit?



#### Reflect

How can you support each other in realising together the aspirations expressed in your list(s)?

#### Pray

Lord God,  
when the pressures of the season lead us away from you,  
guide our thoughts and actions back to the simple manger  
and the gift of life and hope for all people.

**Amen.**

## Advent 4 23–29 December 2018

*When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women' (Luke 1.41-42).*



### DIY nativity

#### Do

Draw, or make, or use an existing set, of nativity figures to think about all the characters involved in the nativity story. You could have fun finding objects or figures to represent characters who are not usually included (e.g. Mary and Joseph's family and neighbours).

Retell the nativity story, allowing your imagination to explore the feelings of the characters involved and any concerns they might have faced. Different members of the family or group could tell different parts of the story – the thoughts of teenagers in relation to Mary might be particularly valuable.

#### Reflect

Does the story remind you of any of your own experiences? Or of people who have played a significant part in your life? When you finish the storytelling, take a moment to think about where the light of the world is shining in your life right now.

#### Pray

Lord Jesus, son of Mary,  
recognised by Elizabeth, loved by Joseph,  
welcomed by strangers, nurtured by family,  
and bring joy and understanding  
to those relationships which are hard.

**Amen.**

