

# *Fully Present*



## **Children's Church / Sunday School / Activity Time Lessons for Advent 2022**

Complete with **liturgical/worship elements** to tie-in to the service, **songs, crafts, games, snacks,** and **object lessons** based on each Sunday's lesson (Year A)

Written by Rev. Sami Pack-Toner, Chaplain  
and Rev. Chris Haughee of Intermountain  
for our supporting churches



## A note about this curriculum...

Last year, Chris reached out to Chaplain Sami and said, *"I've done Object Lessons for Advent in the past, but how about we write a whole Sunday School or Children's Activity Time curriculum complete with songs, games, suggested crafts, and snacks?"* And, Sami said, *"Yes!"* And with that conversation, our first comprehensive Advent curriculum, "Our Watchful Waiting," based on the lectionary passages for Year C (Advent), was born. So this year we follow that successful endeavor by approaching the passages highlighted in Year A for Advent with the theme, **"Fully Present."** If you didn't see last year's materials, here's how each lesson is broken down:

The **worship/liturgical element** is mentioned first, before the lesson, but mainly for reference as to what could be done to tie worship and education together for the children. If you want to simply make these a part of your classroom or children's education department, that is also an option! The idea is to suggest something fun that will engage the imagination.

The **object lesson** leads each week, mentioning what needs to be gathered and a suggested script for presentation. This time concludes with a prayer.

A **game** or activity which builds on the theme introduced in the object lesson follows.

Next comes a **song**... We've looked for songs and lyrics available on YouTube that make them easy to learn. If you are looking to put together a simple Christmas Eve pageant, these songs would be a great addition!

After the song, a **snack**... also connected to the day's theme.

Finally, a **craft**... again, related to the lesson and not too complicated or involved so getting supplies won't break the budget.

A **checklist** of sorts has been added to the beginning of this curriculum that will help you think about how you can create a trauma-sensitive environment that will be inclusive of children with special needs related to mental, emotional, and relational wellbeing. The Advent and Christmas season can be especially stressful, and the checklist may just help you as much as the children!

There is a tie-in to Intermountain's **Change for Children** program, which involves getting collection cans to send home with the children to gather loose change throughout the season. We hope you will consider participating and sharing the mission of Intermountain with your children and families this Advent.

Change for Children is a great way to reinforce the values of charity and compassion during a season where the world will be encouraging your children to be thinking primarily about themselves and what they want for Christmas. We have **cans and prayer cards**, as well as a "Coordinator's Instruction Sheet," should you choose to bless the children of Intermountain by participating in Change for Children. Let us know what you need and we'll be happy to send it out to you!

With our sincere appreciation,


The Development Team at Intermountain

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When preparing for these lessons and desiring to be “Fully Present” and trauma-sensitive, consider this “checklist” that addresses the most common issues that arise in worshipping communities:

 Trauma-affected individuals often have **anxiety** issues that relate to their past experience. A sense of safety can be built from predictable environments. Have you included these considerations in your lesson planning? Will you follow a pattern that helps individuals to know what to expect, and have you shared it with them in written or visual formats (posted for all to see)? How can safety, trust, and consistency be verbalized and practiced by the group?




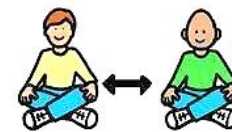
 **Transitions** can be hard for many people, and this is especially the case for those with emotional-relational special needs and a variety of mental health diagnoses (ADHD, ASD, etc.). How will you handle transitions in your time together? What verbal and physical cues or prompts will be given to prepare for a transition? How can you make transitions FUN, and something everyone looks forward to (include a song, silly movements, participation or leadership from the group, etc.)?




 **Sensory-related issues** are common for trauma-affected individuals and those with special needs. What provisions can be made for those who might have difficulty with loud noises, unexpected movement, or touch-taste-smell issues around snacks and crafts? Do you have a place where those who are overwhelmed can take a break without being made to feel punished? Can they initiate this break or does it have to be suggested by an authority figure? How can you give power (agency) to individuals so they can navigate their sensory needs while you lead the group?



 **Touch and personal boundaries** are considerations for those with trauma or mental health diagnoses. Again, a sense of safety and predictability in the environment helps. Is handholding or handshaking (*even hugging?!)* an unspoken expectation in your place of worship? Perhaps think about how you can communicate with the group about seeking **consent** while still encouraging positive physical connection (“Would you prefer a handshake or a high-five?”). If playing a game or doing an activity that involves the potential of pushing limits in terms of personal boundaries and consent (think: tag, hide-and-seek, games that involve close proximity such as being “back-to-back”), how can you address these concerns so everyone feels safe? Can someone approach you if they don’t feel comfortable?



Giving my friends some space.

 **Take your “temperature”** before your time of ministry so you can *respond purposefully* rather than just *reacting subconsciously*. What is your own experience with trauma or childhood adversity that could be triggered by an outburst or individual’s dysregulation? While we cannot prevent our own trauma-response, we can better direct our reactions if we are aware of how we tend to be affected in these moments of stress. **Mindfulness** can help us maintain a helpful tone, posture (body language is SO important), words, and general manner that can go a long way to conveying safety and security for all those in your care.



**REMEMBER:** Establishing a trauma-sensitive setting is not about ensuring there is nothing that may trigger a trauma response in the worshipping or learning environment. (*That would be impossible!*) A trauma-informed approach is about being prepared and equipped to minimize reactions and deescalate a situation with the needed space and empathetic responses helpful for someone who may be overwhelmed or retraumatized.

So do your best to think through your time together and trust yourself... your Christ-like attitude will go a long way. If you are curious and humble, asking “*What must have occurred to cause that reaction?*” for someone who may be retraumatized in a moment and acting out, rather than “*what is wrong with THEM?!*,” will help you build the skills that will make thinking in trauma-sensitive ways more and more natural. Lean into your compassion and rely on the Spirit to guide... **you got this!**



# **Advent Week 1:**

## **Liturgical/Worship element: Noah's Ark and watchfulness**



For your worship area, find ways to include images of Noah's Ark or references to the story. You might be able to find a Noah's Ark playset in the church nursery or borrow one from a member of the congregation. Placing the Ark on the communion table with a blue cloth draped down could be a nice visual reminder of the connection made between Noah and the Ark and Jesus in the manger!

Those who want to focus on the "be watchful" warning that Jesus gives in the gospel passage could explore the "I Spy" game idea in the curriculum and create a visual scavenger hunt for children, youth, and... adults? A checklist of items that can be found throughout the church could be typed out and handed out to those who want to participate.

## **Object Lesson: "All Aboard!"**

**Objects needed:** a picture of Noah's Ark, or perhaps a Noah's Ark toy.

**Theme/Main Idea:** There was a lot of "noise and activity" leading up to the flood and Noah's Ark. Many people were caught by surprise even though they had years and years to change their ways. Advent is a season of preparation, as we think about the first time Jesus came, as a little baby. Jesus said he will come again, and we should build an "advent-like expectation" into our lives so we will be ready!



### **Presentation:**

"Today we start the season of Advent. It is a time we look forward to a celebration of the birth of Jesus. Throughout this season we will talk about the hope that knowing Jesus gives us, and if we listen to Jesus, we find our purpose in life is to love God and love other people. We can show love to others by helping them in difficult times.

Maybe you have heard that we will be taking a special offering for Advent called 'Change for Children?' It's for kids like you who maybe have had a few more difficulties in life or something is making it hard for them right now to have healthy and happy relationships with others. They need our help, support, and prayers to feel the hope we'll be celebrating this season. So before we go any farther, let me pass these out... [pass out change cans and prayer cards.]

We'll be filling these up and collecting them at Christmas so you can have a real impact in the lives of other children. And the prayer cards are for you to keep, to remind you to pray for others. Now... where was I before I passed out the cans?

[children respond]

Ah, yes... I was talking about hope and Advent. Advent is a time we celebrate Jesus coming as a baby. And today's reading from Matthew's gospel reminds us that Jesus is coming again... not as a baby this time, but as King of everyone everywhere! It seems impossible that we could miss his coming that second time... Or could

we? Maybe what I have for my object lesson this morning can help us? Would you like to see what I brought? What do you think it is?

[children guess]

Well, those are all great guesses, but here it is... [bring out Noah's Ark toy or picture] What is this?

[children respond, 'Noah's Ark!']

That's right, it's Noah's Ark... but what does that have to do with Jesus coming as a baby? Or even as Jesus coming back someday, not as a baby, but as God to rescue us and save the world? Any guesses? No... well, the connection comes from something Jesus said himself... not when he was a baby, but much later. In our gospel lesson today, Jesus told his disciples that when he comes back again, it will be like "the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away" (Matthew 24:37-38).

Eating and drinking, getting married, throwing parties, and totally unaware of what God was about to do. Well, it was like that in Noah's day, when Jesus was born, and Jesus is warning us that it is like that still today. It's not as if what God does is hard to miss... if you are looking, waiting, watching, and praying. *If you are fully present.* However, just like getting caught up in rising flood waters, we can get caught up in all the stuff that isn't about Jesus this time of year, and when we do, we miss the amazing things God is doing and has done for us... all the things we celebrate in church at this time of year. Let's make sure that we don't miss the real reason for this season of Advent. Let's keep our eyes and our ears and our hearts open to Jesus!

Will you pray with me?

*God, we thank you that you love us enough to warn us about those things that can distract us and get us carried away from what really matters. Help us to honor you this season by making Jesus the center of our holiday celebrations. Bless our Change for Children effort and remind us to pray for the work of Intermountain this season. In your mercy, fill us with your love, grace, and peace. Amen."*

### **Key Text:** Matthew 24:36-44 (NIRV)

<sup>36</sup> "But no one knows about that day or hour. Not even the angels in heaven know. The Son does not know. Only the Father knows. <sup>37</sup> Remember how it was in the days of Noah. It will be the same when the Son of Man comes. <sup>38</sup> In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking. They were getting married. They were giving their daughters to be married. They did all those things right up to the day Noah entered the ark. <sup>39</sup> They knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man comes. <sup>40</sup> Two men will be in the field. One will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding with a hand mill. One will be taken and the other left.

<sup>42</sup> "So keep watch. You do not know on what day your Lord will come. <sup>43</sup> You must understand something. Suppose the owner of the house knew what time of night the robber was coming. Then he would have kept watch. He would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup> So you also must be ready. The Son of Man will come at an hour when you don't expect him."



## Game: I Spy

There are a few ways that you could play this game that has the theme of “watchfulness” and being attentive.



First, there are any number of fun, free ‘printables’ available online. Here is a great one from “Paper Trail Designs” ([LINK](#)). Have students grab a colored pencil, turn over an egg timer, and call out a particular item or items that they need to find before the timer runs out.

Second, the card game “I Spy” is one that most of the children will be familiar with. Cards are turned over two at a time, and if someone sees a matching picture on the two cards they call it out and collect the cards. The person or team who has the most matches by the end of the game is the winner.

Finally, the version that most of the adults will be familiar with is the classic that has the group take turns saying, “I Spy with my little eye... something that (give a clue to the item... color, starts with the letter \_\_\_\_, etc!)” Then others in the group take turns trying to guess what item the person is referring to.

## Song: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/s7g7J-odII4> (arrangement by Bob Singleton)

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, Desire of Nations, bind  
All peoples in one heart and mind.  
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease  
Fill all the world with heaven’s peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel... Shall come to thee, O Israel.  
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## Snack: Noah’s Ark / God’s Promise rainbow snack

Source: <https://www.thinkingkidsblog.org/noahs-ark-rainbow-snack-for-kids/>

You’ll need a few supplies to make your rainbow snack:

- Graham crackers
- White frosting
- Airhead Xtreme Candy, Rainbow Berry
- Mini marshmallows
- Blue food coloring
- A table knife



Assemble your snacks ahead of time, or as a group in class (if you have the time). Here's how to make your snack together:

First, color the white frosting the color of the sky... a few drops of the blue food coloring should do it! Spread the light blue frosting on your graham cracker.

Second, cut your rainbows (the Airheads "Rainbow Berry" candy) and your marshmallows in half.

Third, place 3-4 halves of your marshmallows on opposite sides of the graham cracker, near the edge so your rainbow has room in the "sky."

Last, make an arch with the rainbow candy between the marshmallow clouds, securing each end in the light blue frosting.

After admiring your creations... EAT!

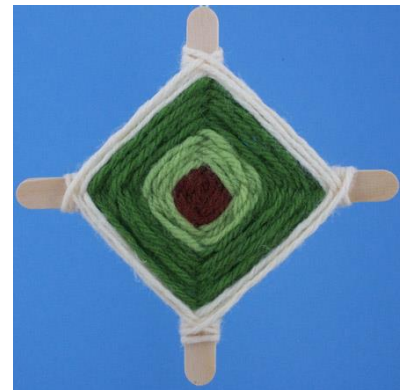
While you are eating, discuss the last time you saw a rainbow... what gave you the idea to look for a rainbow outside? Just as a rainbow comes after a storm, we can look to God in the middle of our troubles as we are waiting for an answer. Of course, the best answer and most precious gift from God is Jesus. Jesus is with us in our storms as well as in our joy in "seeing the rainbow" after the storms pass.

## Craft: God's Eye

**Supplies needed:** craft sticks, different-colored yarn/string

### Directions:

- 1) place sticks together to form an "x".
- 2) Diagonally wrap one side 4 times with some yarn; then do the opposite direction. This secures the frame.
- 3) Wrap the yarn over and around one arm of the "x", then over and around the next arm. Go all the way around and then keep going! Keep the yarn snug as you go.
- 4) Switch colors whenever you want!
- 5) Tie the end off in the middle when you are done.



This popular, soothing craft was originally made by the Huichol, the indigenous people of what's now western Mexico. They were found on altars and shields. Other communities in northern Mexico and the American Southwest made an alternate version that represented the 4 elements (fire, water, earth, air), and the center was the line between God and the world.

There are lots of ways to think of how God's presence in our world helps us feel safe, protect others, and stay in relationship with God. What is your favorite thing about God's eye?

## Advent Week 2:

### Liturgical/Worship element: New life from a stump!

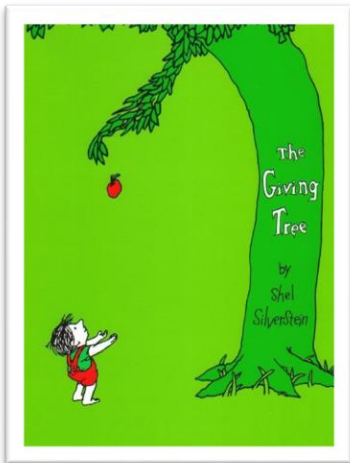
For your worship area, ask someone to create a banner picturing a branch growing out of a stump, with the words of Isaiah 11 (printed later in the curriculum). If you have a youth group that meets during the week, the group could also make posters with this theme to hang up around the church.

Another idea would be to replace the usual flowers with a stump from which a branch is growing. This may be a real stump into which a seedling or leafed branch has been tucked into a hole that was drilled. Another option is to use a potted seedling wrapped with brown paper or burlap to look like a stump.



It would be awesome to have the pastor or reader refer to this display before reading Isaiah 11, urging worshipers to listen for the unique characteristics of that branch from the stump of Jesse's family.

### Object Lesson: "Beyond *The Giving Tree*"



**Objects needed:** A copy of the book, *The Giving Tree*.

**Theme/Main Idea:** Even when things seem hopeless, God gives us hope. When nothing is left of the tree but the stump, there is still life there... just waiting for the right season to spring up again. Shel Silverstein's book, *The Giving Tree*, ends with an old man sitting on a stump and the "tree" is happy again... but the ending of the book is pretty sad, really! The story of Isaiah, in today's passage, is MUCH more hopeful.

#### **Presentation:**

"How are you this morning, children? My object lesson today is a book, and I am guessing it's one that many of you have seen or had read to you before... anyone want to guess?"

[take time for children's guesses... I'd be amazed if someone got it!]

No... though those are all good guesses and well known stories. The book I have [reveal book at this time] is called, *The Giving Tree*! Do you know this book? Oh, it's really good. We don't have time to read it all now, maybe later we could, but for now I want to point out how the Tree in the book and the boy are friends. The book moves through the story with the boy getting older and returning each time to take something more from the tree. At the very end, what is left of the tree?

[turn page to where the old man sits on what is left of the tree... now just a stump]

Right! Just a poor old stump. But still, the story tells us, the tree is happy because the “boy,” now really an old man, can sit on her and she feels connected to the boy once again. And that’s it. That’s the story... kind of happy, and kind of sad. But of the stories I know that talk about stumps, and I am not sure there are too many, *The Giving Tree* is only the second-best story. I know a better one. It’s in the Bible! It’s a great story... really!

Hmmm... you guys don’t look convinced. Maybe I’d better explain...

Do you know about Advent? Advent means “the arrival of an important person or event.” It’s the start of the church year, and throughout the season of Advent we recognize the coming of Jesus as a baby. We celebrate that particular miracle on what day that is coming up? Do you know?

[let kids respond]

That’s right! Christmas! So Advent is the time leading up to Christmas... It’s a time when we look back on the Bible passages that foretold Jesus’ coming so we can learn more about the wonderful gift Jesus was to the world! In the passage from Isaiah that we read this morning, for instance, the prophet talks about the promise of a ‘branch’ that was going to come and save everyone. Do you know what God was actually talking about? Or maybe I should say... Do you know *WHO* God was talking about? [kids guess] That’s right... Jesus!

**Jesus** was the branch Isaiah wrote about. That’s kind of weird, isn’t it? It gets a little less weird if you understand why God promised that branch in the first place.

Back then, the people of Israel were pretty discouraged. They had messed up big time, and they were suffering the consequences of some pretty bad choices. They had turned their backs on God and decided to do things their own way. It didn’t work out very well for them. So like a big beautiful tree getting cut down, all of the ‘amazingness’ of being God’s people was taken away. They had to leave the places they were living and go live somewhere else. They were sad. They had gone from feeling like a big, important, and beautiful tree to a lowly little stump. And as they felt lowly like that stump, without any hope, that’s when God told them that out of that stump they had become, a new tree would sprout! At first it would be so small, it would just be like a little branch coming out of the side of the stump!

Wow... incredible! When they felt their worst and felt like maybe God would just throw up his hands and be done with them, God gave them a promise. God told them that they would have a future leader, a *great great great* (you keep going on and on for a little while...) grandson of King David, who would help make them the type of people who are ‘right with God,’ close to him, and part of God’s family! That’s a wonderful promise to look forward to.

So here we are in Advent, just starting out. Let’s remember how God kept his promise to send the branch—the seedling from the stump of Jesse (*that was King David’s dad*)—and that branch is Jesus, and *most importantly*... God still keeps all his promises today. In our own small way, we can help extend the hope that God gives us by supporting the work Intermountain does with kids and families.

We handed out change cans last week and have some more if you missed that (pass out cans to any who weren’t in church last week), and we’re hoping you fill them up between now and Christmas. You’ll hear a little more about Intermountain as we continue to move through the Advent season. But for now...

Let’s pray:

*God, thank you for your presence in each of our lives. Help us remember the promises that have come true and those that will come true in the future. Give us patience to wait for all the good things you promise to those who love you and place their trust in you. Help us hold out for the best, YOUR best God—for us, and for our church and our community. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

## **Key Text:** Isaiah 11:1-10 (NirV)

Jesse's family is like a tree that has been cut down.

A new little tree will grow from its stump.

From its roots a Branch will grow and produce fruit.

<sup>2</sup> The Spirit of the LORD will rest on that Branch.

The Spirit will help him to be wise and understanding.

The Spirit will help him make wise plans and carry them out.

The Spirit will help him know the LORD and have respect for him.

<sup>3</sup> The Branch will take delight

in respecting the LORD.

He will not judge things only by the way they look.

He won't make decisions based simply on what people say.

<sup>4</sup> He will always do what is right

when he judges those who are in need.

He'll be completely fair

when he makes decisions about poor people.

When he commands that people be punished,

it will happen.

When he orders that evil people be put to death,

it will take place.

<sup>5</sup> He will put on godliness as if it were his belt.

He'll wear faithfulness around his waist.

<sup>6</sup> Wolves will live with lambs.

Leopards will lie down with goats.

Calves and lions will eat together.

And little children will lead them around.

<sup>7</sup> Cows will eat with bears.

Their little ones will lie down together.

And lions will eat straw like oxen.

<sup>8</sup> A baby will play near a hole where cobras live.

A young child will put its hand into a nest

where poisonous snakes live.

<sup>9</sup> None of those animals will harm or destroy anything or anyone

on my holy mountain of Zion.

The oceans are full of water.

In the same way, the earth will be filled

with the knowledge of the LORD.

<sup>10</sup> At that time, here is what the man who is called the Root of Jesse will do. He will be like a banner that brings nations together. They will come to him. And the place where he rules will be glorious.

## Game: Natural Enemies Charades

This game is a takeoff on the improbable images conjured up in Isaiah 11... those animals that might normally be fearful of one another, prey on one another, etc., are portrayed as being at peace. But since we are not there yet, we can have some fun guessing the “predator” being acted out for each of the animals mentioned below.

Like Charades, students will act out the animal they get as a predator [e.g., frog] for the prey that is mentioned [e.g., grasshopper] as a clue to get things going. Points can be awarded, or the individual/team that guesses the correct answer first can be awarded the opportunity to act out the next predator!

Prey #1: grasshopper [student acts out the role of the predator, a **frog**]

#2: frog [student acts out a **snake**, the frog’s predator]

#3: tadpole [**fish**]

#4: fish [**bear**]

#5: worm [**bird**]

#6: rabbit [**fox**]

#7: mosquito [**bat**]

#8: lamb [**wolf**]

#9: cow [**lion**]



## Song: “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmhjEoLgxik>

O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee to-night.

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 the King,  
And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given;  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His Heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him still,  
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray!  
Cast out our sin and enter in,  
Be born in us to-day.  
We hear the Christmas angels,  
The great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Emmanuel!

## **Snack: Broccoli “trees” with ranch dressing and pretzel stick “branches”**

Make sure you cut up the broccoli into small dipping sizes that look like little “trees.” Have plenty of ranch dressing or dip on hand, as some children won’t eat broccoli otherwise.

As you hand out the pretzels, perhaps make the point that often a branch will look like it’s dead (especially in winter), but new life springs forth every year.

Ask the children if they have any experiences to share about trees being cut down and seeing little shoots come from the stump or from the root system.

Ask them why they think God used that imagery with Jeremiah to show that a promised helper was coming from David’s family line.



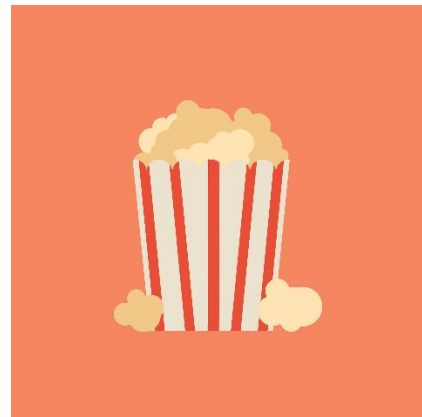
## Craft: Popcorn Sprouts!

You all know that popcorn kernels POP and make a tasty treat....but what about GROWING popcorn kernels into another tasty treat? That seems a little wild, just like Isaiah's claims in the scripture reading for this week!

**Supplies needed:** popcorn kernels, upcycled container (salad tray or takeout container), and potting soil

### Directions:

- 1) Fill container with about 2 inches of potting soil. Make sure it has a way to drain extra water.
- 2) Scatter popcorn kernels all over the top. Don't worry about overcrowding.
- 3) cover the kernels with another layer of soil—about 1 inch. Water well and cover the container with a plastic lid or foil. In 2 or 3 days, you will see tiny shoots starting to appear.
- 4) Open up the lid and water as needed. Once the sprouts are 2-3 inches tall, they can be harvested by snipping at the base. Surprise! More will continue to grow!





## Advent Week 3:

### Liturgical/Worship element: Farming and faith

The passage from James gives us a fun “dress up” opportunity for church... overalls, coveralls, boots, and straw hats... anything that suggests farming or ranching!

If you can get a few straw bales to set up front, toy tractors, and other smaller farm implements, that would only add to the ambiance, and possibly set the stage for a “stable scene” that might be of use later in the Advent season?

An idea to spread the theme out through the whole church would be to buy packets of seeds for each member, with the attached verse on a label or notecard (stapled to the seed packet):

*Brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord comes. See how the farmer waits for the land to produce its rich crop. See how patient the farmer is for the fall and spring rains. You too must be patient. You must remain strong. The Lord will soon come back. (James 5:7-8)*



### Object Lesson: “Farming takes PATIENCE!”

**Objects needed:** One of those packaged Christmas amaryllis plants and a bottle of water.

**Theme/Main Idea:** It can be hard to wait: waiting for Christmas to come, waiting to see family, waiting for school break, waiting for a crop to come, or waiting for a flower to bloom. We can choose to wait patiently, or we can get frustrated—grumbling and setting a bad example—while we wait. James reminds us that while we wait for Jesus to come back, we should be careful HOW we wait, so that when he comes, we are truly ready!

#### **Presentation:**

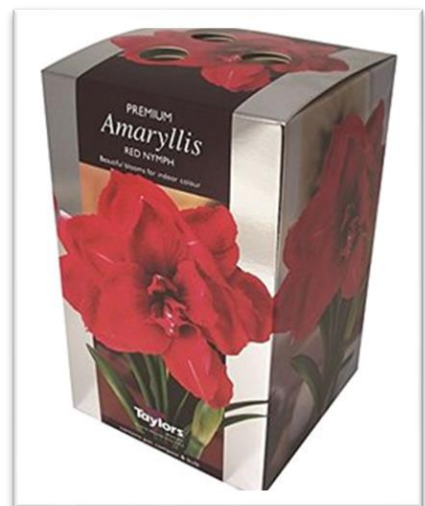
“Oh boy, oh boy! Am I excited... I have a gift here that I got for myself at the store. It’s really pretty. Want to see it?”

[children respond]

Okay, here it is... just look at it! [reveal boxed amaryllis] Look at the pretty picture. There is a beautiful flower inside this box. Shall we open it?

[children respond... as you open the box, your attitude should go from excitement to disappointment]

Wait... wait... there is something wrong. This isn’t a flower! It’s just a pot with dirt in it. Wow! I am really disappointed. What? Some of you are looking at me funny... why? Did I do something wrong? Where is my flower?



[children respond, maybe explaining that you will need to take care of the pot, and that the bulb will grow into a pretty flower]

Oh, so the flower is in here in the dirt somewhere, and I just need to take care of it and it will grow? Okay, I can do that! Flowers and plants need water to grow, right? Okay... I'll just add a little water!

[your attitude should improve temporarily as you gain hope that adding a little water will help your plant grow]

Okay... [pour a little water on the bulb] I gave it some water... now... it's going to grow and bloom, right? [getting frustrated again] Where's my flower!?! Arg! *This is so hard and frustrating!!* What am I doing wrong? Do you know?

[children explain that you need to wait... to be patient... and, eventually, the flower will bloom]

You mean I have to wait? I don't like waiting... I just want it to be pretty and bloom now! Raise your hand if you are like me and you have a hard time waiting...

[most kids will raise their hands]

Yes. Waiting is hard. In today's lesson from the book of James, chapter 5, we read:

*Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged.*

Did you catch that last part? When we don't wait with patience, like a farmer for his crop, we are in danger of becoming grumblers and complainers. Then what's no fun for us becomes no fun for anyone we're around! And we don't want to be the type of people who others are avoiding this Advent season! No, we'd love for others to want to be around us so we can have the opportunity to tell them about the best gift of all... Jesus!

Let's pray:

*Jesus, thank you for being so patient with us even when we are not patient in waiting for you or for some good thing we are hoping we might get in the future! As Advent is a time of waiting and patiently preparing our hearts, guard us from a grumbling spirit. Help us encourage one another to be like the faithful farmer, who plants the seed in the spring and waits until harvest time, trusting in your provision. We can trust in you, Jesus, because you love us and patiently care for us. In your name, Amen.*

### **Key Text:** James 5:7-10 (NIRV)

<sup>7</sup> Brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord comes. See how the farmer waits for the land to produce its rich crop. See how patient the farmer is for the fall and spring rains. <sup>8</sup> You too must be patient. You must remain strong. The Lord will soon come back. <sup>9</sup> Brothers and sisters, don't find fault with one another. If you do, you will be judged. And the Judge is standing at the door!

<sup>10</sup> Brothers and sisters, think about the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. They are an example of how to be patient when you suffer.

## Game: Jenga or Ker-Plunk!

What better way to test some patience and turn-taking than some group games! Try out one of these or a similar game with your group. During the game you can discuss with the group those things that are hardest to wait for (Christmas, your turn while playing a fun game, cookies to bake in the oven, the bathroom when you 'really have to go,' etc.)

If you want, you could rank these items from the most difficult to wait for to the easiest. You just may learn something new about one another as you play the game and discuss!



## Song: “Joy to the World” (Group Publishing)

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ8gE0L1524>

Joy to the world, the Lord is come  
Let Earth receive her King  
Let every heart prepare Him room  
And Heaven and nature sing  
And Heaven and nature sing  
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing

Oh, oh, oh...

He rules the world with truth and grace  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders, wonders, of His love

Oh, oh, oh...

Joy to the world, the Lord is come  
Let Earth receive her King  
Let every heart prepare Him room  
And Heaven and nature sing  
And Heaven and nature sing  
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing

Oh, oh, oh...

## Snack: Fruit salad (or fruit cups)

This one should be an easy “win” as far as popularity goes for the snack time. If you have the ability to make your own fruit salad together as a group, it can be a lot of fun, too. Most of the fruit could be cut up with a simple table knife, so the risk would be minimal. Bananas, apples, grapes, pears, and even canned options like canned peaches or pineapple can be added. If you have a concern that the fruit isn’t going to be ripe, a little dose of honey can sweeten things up to the point where you will have smiles all around! Maybe it’s even an opportunity to talk about how patient we have to be to wait until certain fruits are in season and available as fresh fruit! (Tie-in to James 5:7-8 and the need to be patient in waiting for Jesus’ return).



While snacking, it would be a great time to check in with the kids and see how their Advent experience has been so far. What part of the celebrations and preparations have they enjoyed most? Have they had much success in filling up their Change for Children cans?

What has been hardest (perhaps last week’s focus on preparing the attitude of our hearts? Thinking of others rather than just ourselves?)

## Craft: Paper Chain of Patience

Take some quiet time to think about ways we can practice patience—during the holidays and just everyday life.

**Supplies needed:** construction paper strips, markers/writing tools, tape

### Directions:

- 1) Brainstorm all the different areas we have opportunities to be patient. If you started this discussion during the game time, now is your opportunity to get those great thoughts down on paper!
- 2) Have the kids draw pictures or write sentences about ideas/places they have been patient or could work on being patient.
- 3) Tape them all together as a chain.



After Christmas you all can read through the chains and talk about them. This could be a good time to debrief the holiday season and not focus on the material gifts received.

## Advent Week 4:

### Liturgical/Worship element: Puzzle pieces

We are all familiar with the concept of puzzles where you try to assemble various pieces of cardboard, each with part of an entire picture on it. Most of the time we have an image we are working towards as we assemble the puzzle, usually on the box the puzzle came in. But what if we aren't sure what the image is supposed to be? Where would we start in assembling our pieces in such a situation? Maybe start with the outside border, or sort into piles by color?

Consider decorating the church with “puzzle-themed” images... large posters cut into puzzle piece shapes with the following phrases (or parts of phrases!) on them:

“We need each other”

“I am part of the answer...”

“...and you are a part of the answer, too.”

“CH\_\_CH! What’s missing? U R”

“When connected, we shine brighter.”



It could be fun to hand out small baggies with a few puzzle pieces each to everyone who comes to service. Each baggie could also have a notecard in it that has the words, “We are better together,” or “When connected, we shine brighter,” or something that fits for what you are emphasizing in the message for this Sunday.

### Object Lesson: “It helps to have ALL the information”

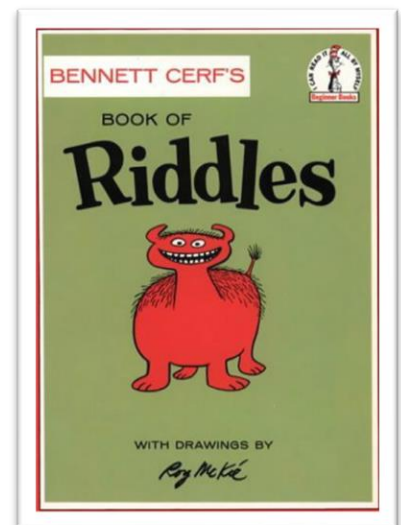
**Objects needed:** A book of riddles, possibly an ‘object’ that ties into the riddle you choose to read for the children.

**Theme/Main Idea:** Riddles are fun—or “work”—because they use assumptions we make about things and turn them on their heads. Maybe it’s a word or phrase that has a double-meaning, but once we know the answer to the riddle it all makes sense. Before then, without all the information, it might confound us. Joseph was ready to “dismiss Mary quietly” when he heard she was pregnant... then he got all the information and the riddle was solved!

#### **Presentation:**

“Hi there, everyone! I have something fun for us today, and maybe a little different. Would you like to see what my object lesson is today?”

[kids respond, “Yes!” and then maybe are disappointed when they see it’s a book...]



Some of you don't look too impressed. But this book can be a lot of fun, because it has riddles in it. Do you know what riddles are?

[children respond... some may even have a riddle to teach you!]

Yes, they are fun and puzzling questions that are hard to answer at first because the answer is unexpected. Here's one of my favorites... [if you don't have a book of riddles or a favorite one you'd like to use, I'd suggest you use the following riddle!]

Ready? Okay, what's black and white and red all over? No, adults... it's not a newspaper! And I'm guessing most of our kids are not that familiar with newspapers and why people read them!

So... What's black and white and red all over? Any guesses?

[children guess, hopefully without success]

Okay, nice guesses... I'll tell you the answer. It's black and white and red all over, and it's... wait for it... a *PENGUIN WITH A SUNBURN!* Isn't that funny?!

That's a pretty silly riddle, but sometimes riddles are more serious. Sometimes riddles are questions that don't present any easy answers. Joseph had a riddle on his hands when he found out that his bride to be, Mary, was pregnant and going to have a baby!

He knew enough to know where babies came from and how they came to be... I'm not going to get into that this morning... but Joseph knew that Mary was a good person, but that the child couldn't possibly be his! "*How could Mary have done this to me?*" Joseph surely thought! He couldn't find an easy answer, so he was going to break off the engagement and not get married to Mary.

But that's when he heard the answer to the riddle he had been given. In Matthew 1:20-21 we read:

*'An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'*

Wow! Totally unexpected, maybe like the answer to my riddle earlier? But once Joseph knew the answer to the riddle, it all made sense... Mary was a good person, and she didn't do anything wrong. In fact, she was such a good person, God chose her to carry the baby Jesus and give birth to the Savior of the world! Now Joseph was asked to be like a foster dad or adoptive parent to Jesus... Jesus wouldn't be blood-related to him, but he would very much be Jesus' dad on earth. What a wonderful riddle and an amazing gift to be given... God trusted Joseph to figure out that riddle and love Jesus as his son and raise him well.

Maybe you've had some tough riddles in life. Maybe you can't figure out how God could possibly bring some good out of a parent's divorce or a friend moving away. Maybe your riddles are more serious, like they are for the kids at Intermountain, where you wonder if you can trust anyone but yourself, or perhaps you wonder if loving someone is worth the hurt that you open yourself up to?

Let's close our time this morning by asking God to help show us where he is in the midst of our riddles in life, especially the ones that don't have any answers that we can figure out. Maybe we won't get an answer like Joseph did, but hopefully we can trust that God will help us and love us through our questions no matter what.



Let's pray:

*God, we know that you trust us just like you trusted Joseph. We get riddles in life, and often we try to figure them out all on our own. Help us to trust you in return, that if and when we need an answer to any riddle in life, you can give us the answer. And if the answer isn't coming to us, maybe you are just asking us to trust you and have faith that it will be okay. We pray for the kids that Intermountain serves, and for the huge questions they have, about you and about other relationships. Show us and show them your love this day and always. In Jesus name, Amen."*

### **Key passage: Matthew 1:18-25 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph, her husband, was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

## **Game: A Puzzle Relay**

This is a pretty easy and straightforward game. Divide the group into two teams and find a place where you can have a relay game. Have a puzzle for each team that has only a few pieces (25 piece puzzles work well, often available at the Dollar Tree or similar stores, or children's wooden puzzles). Each team should have the same number of puzzle pieces to retrieve.

Line up the teams by each other, and one at a time they can "race" down for their team to retrieve a piece. Once they get back to their team, the next person can go and get a piece, until they have all the puzzle pieces. Then, together as a team, they need to assemble the puzzle.

The first team to assemble their puzzle wins!



## Song: “What Child Is This?” (Group Publishing)

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5W3GUDEVWA>

What child is this  
Who lay to rest  
On Mary's lap is sleeping  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet  
While shepherds watch are keeping

This, this is Christ the King  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing  
Haste, haste to bring him laud  
The Babe, the Son of Mary

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh  
Come peasant king to own him  
The King of Kings salvation brings  
Let loving hearts enthrone him

This, this is Christ the King  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing  
Haste, haste to bring him laud  
The Babe, the Son of Mary [repeat]



## Snack: Cheese and crackers and Laffy Taffy

Cheese and crackers are a fun interactive snack. If you can find Laffy Taffy, they have great jokes and riddles on each wrapper! Take turns sharing the jokes and riddles as a group.

If you have cheese and crackers instead, have a few “cheesy” jokes prepared to share with the group. (*Get it?!*) Those in the group can be encouraged to share their favorite church-appropriate jokes, puns, or riddles, too.

## Craft: Make-Your-Own-Puzzle

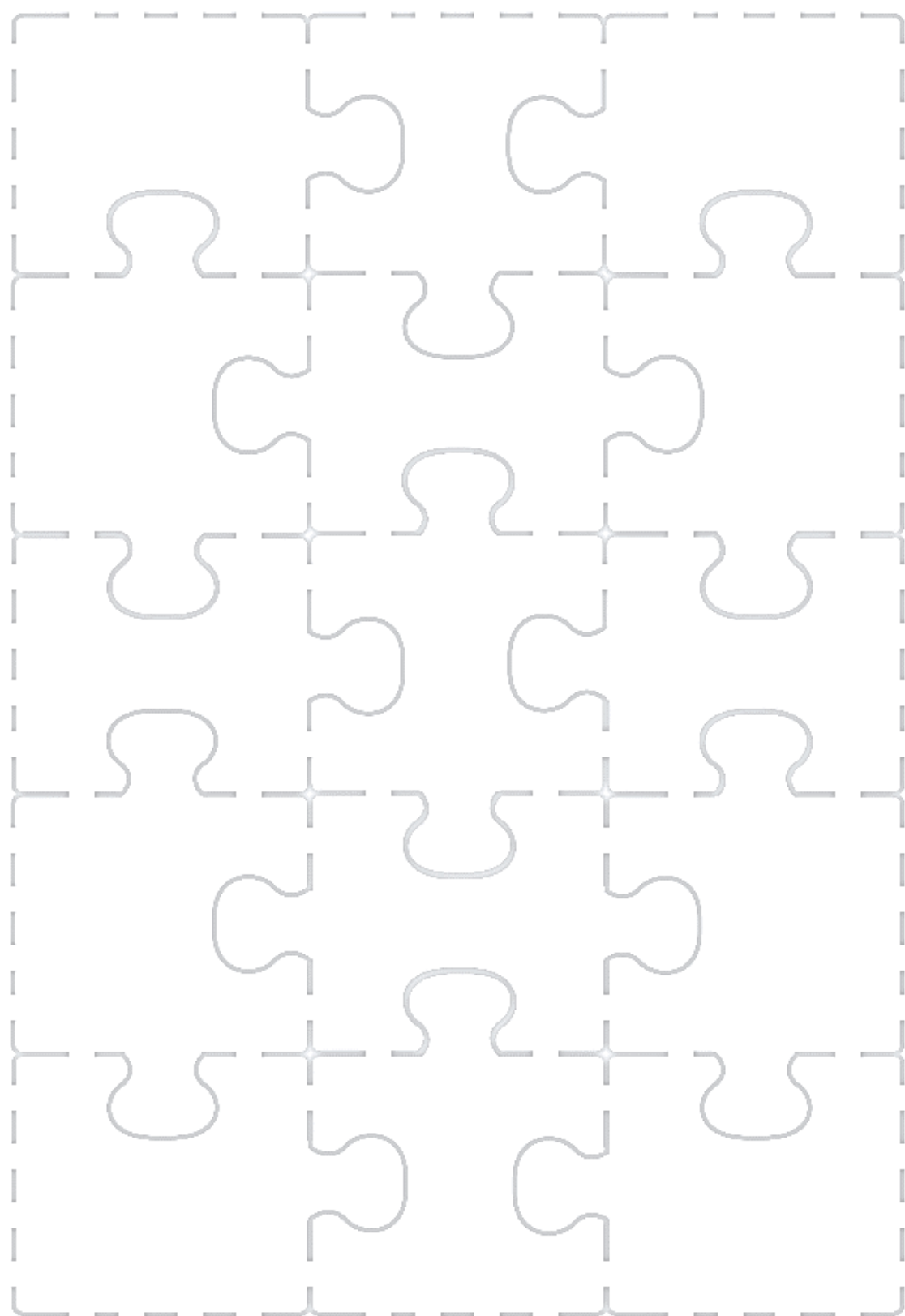
Creative juices can flow with this fun craft project! You can give specific directions for a theme for the pictures that are drawn, or the kids can pick their own theme.

**Supplies needed:** puzzle template (on the next page), coloring tools, cardboard of some type (cereal box, packing box), and Ziplock bags for keeping the puzzles together when they are sent home.

### Directions:

- 1) Choose your paper type and print out the puzzle template.
- 2) Draw and color your puzzle on the template.
- 3) Glue the template to your cardboard.
- 4) Cut out each piece and reinforce with more glue, if needed.
- 5) Enjoy each other’s puzzles!







# Christmas Eve/Christmas Day:

## **Liturgical/Worship element: “Go Tell it on The Mountain!”**

Undoubtedly, songs of angels and banners or other worship art will feature angels on this night... so we don't need to set out another angel and draw the children's attention to it. As the gospel passage draws attention not only to the angels, but to the shepherds who were given the message and asked to share it, I would suggest also putting out images or figurines of shepherds and sheep. Singing “Go Tell it on The Mountain” would be an excellent idea for connecting the gospel passage to your time of worship together.



A fun additional touch would be to find a “message board” of some sort... some light up, others have the same track system and letters that the old non-electronic church reader-boards use. On this message board display the words “GO AND TELL! YOU ARE THE MESSENGERS THIS CHRISTMAS” as big and bold as you can. Point out to the church that “angelos,” the word in Greek from which we get “angel,” simply means messenger. The angels came to tell the shepherds of the Christchild on the first Christmas Eve... now, like the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth, we are the Christmas “angels” who take the message of Jesus out to others!

## **Object Lesson: “Go Share the Good News!”**

**Objects needed:** A sheep, or a picture of a shepherd

**Theme/Main Idea:** Just as the angels announced the good news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds, we can tell others about why we really celebrate Christmas. There are plenty of people out there who don't really know, and we can point them to Jesus!

### **Presentation:**

“Who here likes to tell other people good news? I know I do. It's fun to share a message with someone when you know it's going to encourage them, make them happy, or give them a reason to celebrate. So if you like to share good news, and I like to share good news, I am guessing that almost everyone does. And, on that first Christmas Eve, there was some very good news to tell. But before I get ahead of myself, maybe you would like to see what I brought for the object lesson today?”

[take out sheep, or picture of shepherds and sheep]

Yes! It's a sheep. Can you guess why I have a sheep? Well, the angels on that first Christmas Eve got to share some very good news. Do you remember what it was? The angel told the shepherds,

*“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.”*



This news did bring great joy to all the people! God's people had been waiting for a LONG time for the Messiah, God's chosen messenger, to come. I am not sure they understood fully that not only would the Messiah be a messenger for God, but that he would be God himself—the Lord! And who is it who got to hear about this great news first?

[the children respond]

Right! It was the shepherds just outside the town of Bethlehem. They ran to see the baby Jesus... What amazing news to receive, that God came to us as a baby! Jesus came to live with us and to experience everything it means to be a human being. And just as the shepherds were told to go and see and **THEN** to go and tell, we are asked to do the same.

It's good that we have come together tonight to celebrate Jesus' birth. The shepherds, too, went to the stable and found the baby Jesus. But—and this is important—the shepherds didn't stay at the stable. They left there and told anyone who would listen about what they had seen and heard. And, the Bible says, all were amazed to hear the story. I think if we trust God enough to share the story, too, we might find that there are more people out there willing to listen and be amazed, as well.

I see some have brought their Change for Children cans back tonight. Thank you! I'll make sure they all get rounded up and on to Intermountain for the children and families to be blessed by your generosity. We'll wrap up our collection next Sunday, as we talk about how Jesus, Mary, and Joseph didn't have much time to enjoy being a new family together before they were running for their lives! But... that's next Sunday, and I don't want to get ahead of myself...

Thank you so much for being great listeners, for filling up your change cans, and for coming along with me on this journey through Advent. I hope you have a blessed Christmas.

Let's pray:

*God, thank you for giving us Jesus. You have entrusted to us the very best news in all the world—You love us so much You sent your Son to be with us! Christmas is not just about presents and lights, it's about the joy that comes from knowing that we are loved by You. That is great news, and we hope that we can share this news with others so that all can share in our joy! In Jesus' name, Amen."*

**Key Text:** Luke 2:1-14, (15-20), (NIRV)

In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world.<sup>2</sup> It was the first time a list was made of the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria.<sup>3</sup> Everyone went to their own town to be listed.

<sup>4</sup> So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David.<sup>5</sup> He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby.<sup>6</sup> While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born.<sup>7</sup> She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. That's because there was no guest room where they could stay.

<sup>8</sup> There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were taking care of their sheep.

<sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified.

<sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people.

<sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly, a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said,

<sup>14</sup> “May glory be given to God in the highest heaven!  
And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!”

*(<sup>15</sup> The angels left and went into heaven. Then the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem. Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”*

*(<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby. The baby was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> After the shepherds had seen him, they told everyone. They reported what the angel had said about this child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things like a secret treasure in her heart. She thought about them over and over. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned. They gave glory and praise to God. Everything they had seen and heard was just as they had been told.)*

## Game: Shepherd/sheep “Scavenger Hunt”

Most churches try and keep the families together for Christmas Eve service. So a “game” that can be played would be a simple pencil and paper “scavenger hunt” done with ears and eyes... and the categories can be generated based on your local tradition. We have suggested some based on the liturgical/worship element mentioned above to get the creative juices flowing!

Here are some ideas of what children could tally or write down:

1. Number of sheep or images of sheep in the sanctuary
2. Number of times the word “shepherd(s)” is sung or said
3. What gospel does the reading come from tonight about the angels appearing to the shepherds?
4. How many people are in the choir/praise team/etc.?
5. How many people went up to light the Advent candles?
6. How many candles are lit on the Advent wreath?

## Song: “Go Tell it on The Mountain!”

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVX6to3OZsM>

While shepherds kept their watching  
O'er silent flocks by night  
Behold throughout the heavens  
There shone a Holy light

Go, tell it on the mountain  
Over the hills and everywhere  
Go, tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus Christ is born

The shepherds feared and trembled  
When, lo! Above the Earth  
Rang out the angel chorus  
That hailed our Savior's birth

Go, tell it on the mountain  
Over the hills and everywhere  
Go, tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus Christ is born

Down in a lowly manger  
Our humble Christ was born  
And God sent us salvation  
That blessed Christmas morn

Go, tell it on the mountain  
Over the hills and everywhere  
Go, tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus Christ is born [repeat]

## **Supplemental Object Lesson (for the first Sunday after Christmas):**

### *Collection day for Change for Children!*

**Objects Needed:** a few loose pennies or coins, and a jar FULL of pennies or coins.

**Theme/Main Idea:** By itself, a penny isn't worth very much. But lots of pennies together can buy much more! Small gifts can seem insignificant alone, but together many small gifts can be used by God to make a huge difference.



### **Presentation:**

"I see you have brought your cans back with you today! That's great! I can hear the satisfying sound of clinking coins being moved around in your cans. To help us focus during this time, however, why don't we pass all those cans to me...?"

[Take a moment to collect the cans from the children, thanking each of them]

Wow! Look at all this... fantastic! And this leads us right into what I wanted to share with you today.

[hold up a penny]

What is this? Right! It's a penny. What can you buy with a penny these days? Anything? No, not really... not anymore. When I was a child, you could still buy candy for a penny in the store... now, well, it costs at least a quarter, right? That's 25 pennies! Boy, how things have changed.

Did you know that the government is talking about not making pennies anymore? It seems it costs more to make them than they are actually worth! In fact, our neighbors to the north in Canada have stopped making pennies, and now every purchase gets rounded up (or down) to the nearest nickel. The penny doesn't get much respect.

A penny isn't worth much. We know that. And sometimes we might feel like what we are doing for God isn't worth much either. No one seems to notice it, or nothing seems to change. Sometimes we might think... 'Why bother?!'

I wonder if that's what happened after the excitement of the first Christmas settled down. Jesus was born. His family fled to Egypt. They returned years later and went to live in Nazareth. Then, until Jesus is 12, we don't hear anything about him. And after that, two decades pass until he starts his ministry of preaching, teaching, healing, and telling others of God's love. As all that time passed between that first Christmas day and his baptism by John in the wilderness, I wonder what some of those shepherds thought. I wonder what the wise men thought. Maybe they were tempted to believe that it didn't really happen. Maybe it wasn't a big deal, after all? Maybe a little baby wasn't going to change everything...

But the amazing thing is this... that baby did change the world. As little and as helpless as baby Jesus was, he was God's gift to us: The promise that everything was going to change.

You know what else is amazing? Let's see... though a penny by itself isn't worth much... let's take a look at what we have here... [hold up your jar of pennies, as well as some of the cans the children have brought in]

We've got lots of pennies and other coins here! Lots of little coins making one big collection! Wow! You guys are amazing... great job!

All together, we are making a difference. That's why it's important to remember that our efforts are not isolated. We are doing what we do for Jesus' sake alongside many others who also love Jesus. Our Change for Children cans will join those from many other churches and many other families. Added up, it will make a big difference. God can take lowly little pennies and make them the most important part of what He is doing in the lives of children at Intermountain.

Thank you. Today makes my heart very happy, and I can see it makes you happy, too. Let's pray and thank God for this opportunity we have been given to take all our gifts and prayers and add them to the amazing work that He is doing at Intermountain...

*"God, take our small gifts and multiply them many times. You are in the business, God, of taking what we would count as nothing much at all—throw away junk, even—and using it to build your coming Kingdom. Bless our change can offering, Jesus, not for our sake, but for yours, and for the sake of the families and children at Intermountain. As we have been blessed, we seek to be a blessing. As you have encouraged our hearts, we pray that our efforts and our gifts would encourage others. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

### **Key Text:** Luke 2:41-52 (NirV)

Every year, Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. <sup>42</sup> When Jesus was 12 years old, they went up to the feast as usual. <sup>43</sup> After the feast was over, his parents left to go back home. The boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But they were not aware of it. <sup>44</sup> They thought he was somewhere in their group. So they traveled on for a day. Then they began to look for him among their relatives and friends. <sup>45</sup> They did not find him. So they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple courtyard. He was sitting with the teachers. He was listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> Everyone who heard him was amazed at how much he understood. They also were amazed at his answers. <sup>48</sup> When his parents saw him, they were amazed. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been worried about you. We have been looking for you everywhere."

<sup>49</sup> "Why were you looking for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" <sup>50</sup> But they did not understand what he meant by that.

<sup>51</sup> Then he went back to Nazareth with them, and he obeyed them. But his mother kept all these things like a secret treasure in her heart. <sup>52</sup> Jesus became wiser and stronger. He also became more and more pleasing to God and to people.





## Would you consider becoming a “Caring Friend?”

Caring Friends are a special group of donors to Intermountain who give monthly to the work of healing through healthy relationships. Over the course of a year, a monthly gift that fits your budget can work wonders in the life of a child at Intermountain.

For less than a dollar a day, you can provide for the physical, emotional, and educational needs of a child while providing much needed financial stability to the organization as a whole.

Visit <https://intermountain.givingfuel.com/donate> and click the “monthly” giving option to be enrolled in our Caring Friends program. Include a contact email and you will be placed on our newsletter list that will keep you informed of everything your support is achieving in the hearts and lives of the young people served by Intermountain.

