

ADVENT 2007



Advent (from the Latin adventus, which means “coming”), the four week season before Christmas, begins the Christian Year. Traditionally, Advent has been a time for repentance, as God’s people consider why it was that Jesus came into the world; a time for faith, as we look for a fresh advent of Christ in our lives right now; a time for stirring ourselves up to look for our Lord’s Second Coming; and, of course, a time for joy as we prepare ourselves for yet another celebration of Christ’s First Advent, his Incarnation—the mystery of the coming of the eternal Son of God into history in human flesh.

The Christian Year, beginning with Advent, traces the major events of our Lord’s life and invites us to celebrate year after year, his humiliation (his birth, suffering, and death) and his exaltation (his resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Spirit)—not because we need a little excitement and drama to “lift” the routine of worship and work, but because Jesus’ humiliation and exaltation are our life. But it also happens that the whole story is a remarkable drama!

What is the meaning of Advent for us especially this year, as we have been pushing ourselves to follow the example of Peter and “step out of the boat” into the waves of uncertainty as we try to reach out in Jesus’ name to a culture lost and wandering in its technological wizardry and its endless refinements of the “good life”—from music to health to saving the planet?

During Advent we are to be preparing ourselves as believers for a fresh celebration of the event by which the Coming Kingdom of Light broke into our world of sometimes-crass, sometimes-refined darkness: the incarnation of the eternal Son of God in human flesh. This is the great message we have for the world—for our friends, our co-workers and families and neighbors. This is the message our ministries and missionaries are sowing as seed all around the earth. But we will only be good ambassadors of Jesus Christ to others if we are longing to be near to him ourselves, as Peter was when he jumped out of the boat; only if we are abiding in Christ and “keeping ourselves unstained from the world,” as the apostle James once put it. Here are a few practical suggestions that might help you ready yourself for a Christ-centered Christmas—which always means an experience of Christmas in which you find yourself longing for others to know Jesus, not as a figurine in a nativity set, but as a Savior and as a friend who can identify with us, as the One who teaches us what our life is Really All About.

Try some of these as Advent begins:

*Don’t let yourself get into a righteous huff about “how Christmas has been commercialized.” Expect it, and thank your God you don’t have to buy into it.

*Do practical things to draw near to Jesus Christ: shut the world out for half an hour, and over a hot cup of tea listen to music that celebrates the coming of God among us; or walk in the park and pray your thanks to God the Son that he was thinking of you when he came into our history; or read Christmas stories to yourself at Starbucks.

*Don’t let shopping be the main thing you do to get ready for Christmas.

*Use the Advent devotions we're handing out (written by Henri Nouwen) to focus on what Jesus' coming means for you—and for all the people you know.

*Pray with seriousness through Advent for just one person you can have a real conversation with, about the meaning of Christmas.

*Enjoy Jesus this Christmastide. He loves you.

—Ron Lutjens

—Worship—

In our liturgy through Advent we will get ourselves ready for Christmas by focusing our praise on the glory of Jesus Christ in a few of his divine titles as Messiah: Bright Morning Star, Emmanuel, Prince of Peace, Root of Jesse. Each of these names or titles highlights a different facet of Jesus' person and his redeeming work on our behalf. Each is worth pondering and meditating on during Advent, especially in preparation for Lord's Day worship on the Sunday that name is highlighted. Look up in advance each week the great "Christmas prophecies" of the Old Testament (listed below) that will be read on each Sunday.

December 2. 1st Sunday in Advent. *Celebrating Our Messiah: Bright Morning Star*
Numbers 24:15-19

December 9. 2nd Sunday in Advent. *Celebrating Our Messiah: Emmanuel—God With Us*
Isaiah 7:10-17

December 16. 3rd Sunday in Advent. *Celebrating Our Messiah: Prince of Peace*
Isaiah 9:1-11

Special Children's Worship: Special worship oriented toward our children. Usually we do this on the 4th Sunday of Advent, but this year we are doing it on the 3rd Sunday because the 4th Sunday falls on the day before Christmas Eve and many children will be traveling with their families.

December 23. 4th Sunday of Advent. *Celebrating Our Messiah: Root of Jesse*
Isaiah 11:1-10

Then on **Christmas Day** we will worship Jesus together on Tuesday morning, December 25, at **11:00 am**. Please note the change in the normal Sunday worship time.

—Advent Worship at Home—

Advent Wreaths

The custom of marking progress through Advent by using an evergreen wreath with candles probably originated in Germany. A wreath of evergreens is made (symbolizing God's never-ending love for his children) and four candles—one for each week in Advent—are placed around the wreath. The Christmas candle (white) is placed in the center. As each week advances, beginning with Sunday, another candle is lit (symbolizing that it is Christ who is the light of the world) until on Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day, all the candles are shining. We will have a wreath in the sanctuary for our worship, but people might want to make one for their own use at home. If you don't have

an actual wreath, you can still arrange four candles in a circle and the “wreath” will appear when you put a few evergreen boughs among the candles.



Home Worship

We want to encourage parents in particular to have a time of family worship when the candles of the Advent wreath can be lit, a Scripture read, a song sung, and the drama and meaning of Christ's coming into the world explained in terms understandable to children. For children, things appeal more to the eyes than to the ears, and parents shouldn't underestimate how much something like an Advent wreath, with its greenery and bright candlelight, can capture a child's imagination! Why should we let our children's imagination be captured by Santa Claus, store decorations, and the general fribble of our culture at Christmas, and not make an effort to stir up their senses and imagination for the sake of the astounding wonder of the Word made flesh? Once the imagination is stirred, Christ can be the content which fills it.

If you don't regularly go over your child's Sunday School lesson and Scripture memory verse at home in the week following class, Advent family devotions would be a good place to begin that important discipline. Anticipation builds as we approach Christmas Day! For children we have two handouts: “*ADVENT•ures*”—Family Activity Devotions for Advent for families with children in grades 1 through 6 and Advent Mobile: “*Living Light Was Born One Night*” for children ages 1 through second grade. Please pick up one or both, depending upon the ages of your children.

Then for adults there's an Advent devotional booklet called *Living In Hope* by Henri Nouwen. Each day of Advent there's a meditation centered on the coming of God into our world. We bought one for each household to help bring Advent worship to your home, so please take one with you this Sunday.

—Charity—

Christmas is a time to set the pattern for the coming year: practicing charity—which just means love—in Christ's name by giving to those in need. Here are a few opportunities:

Adopt a Family for Christmas and More

The Mercy Ministry has had our annual “giving tree” up for two weeks. There are still a few gifts, represented by ornaments on the tree to still get! **So let's get them all taken!** And we also still **want food, and monetary contributions to help with our gift giving.** And remember to bring everything back on **Sunday, December 9.**

We adopted a single mom with a 3-year old son, and a single, disabled, 72-year old man through Webster-Rock Hill Minist contributions are generous enough, we will provide a gift to the utility of their choice to each of the families. Gifts for the families are represented by red or yellow-gold ornaments. We will be making home deliveries to these fa

Mission Gate Angels—We are also providing 10 gifts (\$20-25 range) for children (infants through age 10) whose gifts are represented by “**angel**” ornaments on the tree. These children will attend a Christmas Party sponsored by Mission Gate, an outreach in Jesus' name to prisoners and their families. Parents of

these children are presently incarcerated. The gift you purchase for a child may be the only gift that he/she receives for Christmas. For more about Mission Gate, their website is www.missiongateministry.org.

Gifts from Our Children to Other Children

Most of these ornaments have been taken, but we have a few left and we invite anyone the congregation to pick one and get that gift. They are represented by the small **lavender** ornaments. These smaller gifts will be given to the 3 year old son of the mom we adopted, and to children of homeless women being served at the Grace & Peace Fellowship Winter Shelter. These gifts are estimated to be in the \$5-10 range. (This was an opportunity originally intended for our younger children.)



Families in Brazil — We are giving \$25 each for five families who are ministered to by Brazilian pastor, Leonardo Carvalho and his wife Alessandra in Brazil. These ornaments have been taken.

- **Volunteer** at the Grace and Peace Winter Shelter for homeless women during the holidays, Or volunteer at other times, consider preparing a breakfast or an evening meal for the Shelter during the rest of its season. Contact the Shelter at 314.367.8959. We will hear from Melody Burke on December 9.
- **Do something special** for someone in need, say, a widow or an elderly person or a single parent in the church or in your neighborhood.
- **Open your home** for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day dinner to someone who will be alone.
-

—Appreciation—

Staff Christmas Gift

As is our custom, we will be taking up a collection for all our paid staff (part-time and full-time). Checks can be written to “Old Orchard Church” and designated “Staff Gift.” (If you wish to designate a specific staff person you may do so. The rest of the money collected will be divided among the staff.). Our paid staff includes *Greg Roig*, music director; *Susan O’Neal*, custodian; *Cheryl Cook*, accompanist; *Durinda Hood*, administrative assistant; and *Mark Tucker*, and *Ron Lutjens*, pastors.

Parlor Fellowship: Sunday, December 9 after worship An Advent Celebration!

Hosting are Kathy Jennings and Valerie Powers. Please sign up to bring food—we need more sweetbread and vegetables. Do plan to join us for this time of fellowship!



Lessons and Carols: December 15 and 16

We'll have two evenings: Saturday, December 15 & Sunday, December 16.

On Saturday, December 15, at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Richard and Jane Winter in the Central West End (5086 Westminster Place), and on Sunday, December 16 at 6:30 p.m. at Milligan House, we'll do our own version of the Festival of Lessons and Carols. For those not familiar with this, Lessons and Carols is an old Anglican tradition dating back to the mid 1800's in which carols, Scripture and poetry readings all highlighting the great Drama of Redemption, are woven together in a tapestry of quiet reflection on the wonder of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Limited seating so sign up to come! And bring a platter of Christmas treats.

Children are welcome to come to this if they are old enough to listen quietly.



Advent Ornaments: Sundays, December 9 & 16

During worship on December 9, the children (grades 6 and under) will be dismissed to the church basement to make ornaments. On the following Sunday, December 16, during worship, the kids will come forward and decorate the tree in the sanctuary with their ornaments.

In preparation, we are asking for your help—

- 1) **Sunday, December 9:** *Help the kids make their ornaments during worship.*
- 2) Also, on **December 16**, stay 15-30 minutes after church to *help clean-up and prepare ornaments for hanging* (to be hung on the tree during worship on Sunday, December 16). Call Christine Raquepaw, 314.968.6829 if you can help.

Christmas Caroling:

Sunday, December 23, 6:00 p.m.

On Sunday, December 23, at 6:00 p.m., we'll gather at Milligan House and then go out and carol the Christmas message to our neighbors. We will provide candles inside small jars, BUT WE DO NEED VOICES! We'll carol in the neighborhood, and then drink hot chocolate and eat treats in front of a fire in the Milligan House. Please bring a plate of Christmas eats, too!



Kids' Christmas Craft Sale! Sunday, December 16

Kids! Christmas Craft Sale again! Kids 18 years and younger are invited to make Christmas presents that they can show and sell to others in the fellowship. Date of the sale: **Sunday, December 16** after worship. If you plan to make things this year, please let Kelli McKie know at 636.230.5754 or e-mail Kelli at kelli@natemckie.com.

For those of you new to the church, our kids have displayed some wonderful talents and hard work in the past. Some have made candlesticks from things in the woods, some wax candles, cookies, breads, note holders, marbled note paper, fire starters, wrapping paper, ornaments—lots of great gift ideas. Plan on buying a few last minute gifts!

—Witness—

God has called us to witness to the truth of his incarnation in Jesus Christ. Think about inviting friends, neighbors, and classmates to some of the things we're doing during Advent and Christmastide, especially to the Lessons and Carols. These are wonderful opportunities to draw people into the warmth of Christ's light and truth.

—Festive Food—

To summarize, there are four special festivities beyond our weekly worship, and we need you to bring food to three of them. Good food is a gift from God and helps us celebrate; but whether we have enough at these festivities depends upon the generosity of those who come.



◆Parlor Fellowship

Sunday, December 9, after worship at the Milligan House. *Sign up to bring food!*

◆Lessons & Carols

Saturday, December 15 (at the Winter home) & Sunday, December 16 (at Milligan House), 6:30 p.m. Limited seating. Sign up to come!
Bring a platter of Christmas treats.

◆Neighborhood Caroling

Sunday, December 23, 6:00 p.m., meet at Milligan House.
Refreshments afterwards at the Milligan House.
Bring a platter of treats.

◆Christmas Day Worship

Tuesday, December 25, **11:00 a.m.**
On Christmas Day we will be feeding our souls together on Christ and his Word and
in the Lord's Supper, and then feasting in our homes on good Christmas fare!

