

Advent 2009



Messiah—The Names

What do the Old Testament names for Messiah mean for us in Advent, especially this year, as we are stirring ourselves up to **know the Lord**—and are trying to **press on to know the Lord** better than we do now? Especially this year as our mother country stands on the brink of escalating the war in Afghanistan? Especially this year as the political debates about domestic issues have raised again burning questions about the role of the state in addressing social problems?

Advent (from the Latin *adventus*, “coming”) is the four-week season before Christmas. 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). We celebrate the redeeming work of Christ not because it gives a quick fix to all our relationship problems or our financial problems, but because we have come to believe Jesus when he says we have the right to **be of good cheer** because he has overcome every trouble the world knows and one day will make them all disappear.

During Advent we prepare ourselves as believers for a fresh remembering of the event by which the Coming Kingdom of Light broke into our world of sometimes-crude, sometimes-refined darkness: the incarnation of the eternal Son of God in human flesh. This is the great message we have for an unstable world—for our friends, our co-workers and families and neighbors. This is the message we and our ministries and missionaries are to be investing all around the earth in order to produce something worthy of the Lord who bought us. But we will only be good ambassadors of Jesus Christ to others *if we are longing to go deeper in our relationship with him*; only if we are longing for him to come to us and to our families and our church as spring rain comes to refresh the earth; only if we are growing in our ability to put Christ and his Kingdom purposes above every other thing and allow him to be in and through us what he wants to be: a **Prince of Peace**, **Emmanuel**, the **Root of Jesse**, a **Bright Morning Star**.

Here are a few practical suggestions to 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, a good Master, and the one and only Leader who can bring the lasting peace and prosperity that people everywhere need, make movies about, long for—even die for.

What can you do to know the Lord better this Christmas season?

*Christmas has been obscenely commercialized. We agree on that; so expect it, despise it, and then get over it. Thank your God you don’t have to buy into it—and don’t go around being sour about it.

*Sign up to buy gifts for the families the Mercy Ministry is putting before us, and let it mean something to you that their economic needs are probably greater than your own.

*Do practical things to draw near to Jesus Christ: shut the world out for half an hour, and over a hot drink 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 something Christian on the theme of Christmas, just for your own benefit.

*Don’t let shopping be the main thing you do to get ready for Christmas; and dare to cut back on the size of the gifts you give people.

*For families with children, use the Advent devotions we’re handing out to focus on what Jesus’ coming means for you—and for all the people you know.

*Pray through Advent for one person you can talk to about the real meaning of Christmas.

*Enjoy Jesus this Christmastide. He became a human being for you.

—Ron Lutjens

—Worship—

In our liturgy through Advent we will get ourselves ready for Christmas by celebrating Jesus Christ in the meaning and power of four of his messianic titles: **Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, Root of Jesse, Bright Morning Star**. What's in a name? Sometimes nothing; sometime a lot. When God confers the name, and it's a name attaching to his Messiah and his work of redeeming the world, then we can rest assured that everything that name signifies will, in fact, come to pass. There *will* one day be peace throughout the whole earth, because Messiah Jesus really *is* the Prince of Peace, and so on. Look up at home before Sunday the great "Christmas prophecies" of the Old Testament (listed below) that will be read each week.

- November 29** 1st Sunday of Advent *Celebrating Messiah Jesus: Prince of Peace*
Isaiah 9: 1-7
- December 6** 2nd Sunday of Advent *Celebrating Messiah Jesus: Emmanuel*
Isaiah 7:14; 40:1-11
- December 13** 3rd Sunday of Advent *Celebrating Messiah Jesus: Root of Jesse*
Isaiah 11:1-10
- December 20** 4th Sunday of Advent *Celebrating Messiah Jesus: Morning Star*
Special Children's Worship: (Early Christmas worship oriented toward our children, since many families will be gone when Christmas arrives)
- December 25** **Christmas Day** We will worship Jesus together on Thursday morning, at **11:00 am**—not 10:15, our 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 families with children we have Advent devotional booklets titled "Wake Up to Joy." They will be out on a table so please pick one to take home and use with your children.

For adults we are handing out a set of readings from December 1 through Christmas Day that highlights a different messianic name each day. Please take one with you this Sunday and use it in your private worship at home.

—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 introduced our annual "giving tree" last week. There are gifts, represented by ornaments on the tree, to still take! And we now have requests from the Winter Shelter (for children/grandchildren of the ladies) so we actually are adding gift ornaments this week to the tree. **So let's get them all taken!** And we also *want food, and if you don't want to take an ornament of the tree, contributions are welcomed to help with our gift giving.* And remember to bring everything back on **Sunday, December 13.**



The Families

This year the Mercy Ministry, on behalf of Old Orchard Church, adopted two families through Webster-Rock Hill Ministries' "Adopt a Family for Christmas" program. One is a single mom with 3 children: 3 month old girl, 14 year old girl and a son in junior college, age 20; the other family is a disabled grandmother and husband with four grandchildren—ages 4, 11, 12 (girls) and 9 year old (boy).

We are providing gifts for each family member, food for a Christmas meal (including a gift certificate for meat and fresh items) and if possible, additional non-perishable foods to help "stock their pantry." Depending upon contributions, we will include in our gift giving a gift to the utility of their choice for each of the families. Gifts for the families are represented by green ornaments. We will be making home deliveries to these families the weekend of December 19.

Mission Gate Angels

We are also providing 10 gifts (\$20-25 range) for children (ages 3 through 8) whose gifts are represented by red and green "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. If there is anyone in the congregation who can deliver our gifts to Westminster Christian Academy on Friday, December 18, let Durinda Hood know. For more about Mission Gate, their website is www.missiongateministry.org.

Gifts from Our Children to Other Children-

We added these 29 ornaments this week (November 29), and we invite children in the congregation (but also others in the congregation) to take one and get a gift for that child. They are represented by the **purple** ornaments. These smaller gifts will be given to the children of homeless women being served at the Grace & Peace Fellowship's Winter Shelter. These gifts are suggested to be in the \$10 range. We encourage families with younger children to take one.

See the green "Adopt a Family for Christmas & More" handout for more details, including volunteer opportunities during this season. And the deadline to bring food, gifts/gift cards, monetary contributions is **Sunday, December 13.** Thanks! (Checks should be written to Old Orchard Church and designated "Adopt a Family.")

More Suggestions

- **Volunteer** at the Grace and Peace Winter Shelter for homeless women during the holidays, Or volunteer at other times, consider preparing a Sunday morning breakfast or an evening meal for the Shelter. The Meals Coordinators (for both evenings and breakfast) is Emily Holcombe (see print copy for e-mail address). Or contact the Shelter at 314.367.8959.
- **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; *Lina Stanly*, accompanist; *Durinda Hood*, administrative assistant; and *Mark Tucker*, and *Ron Lutjens*, pastors.

—Merrymaking—

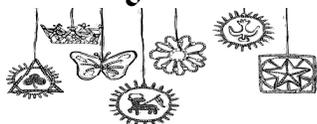
Parlor Fellowship: Sunday, December 6 after worship

An Advent Celebration!

Our hosts are Betsy Roig and Marci Robertson. There are a few items still needed—sign-up! Do plan to join us for this time of fellowship!

Advent Ornaments:

Sundays, December 13 & 20



During worship on December 13, the children (grades 6 and under) will be dismissed to the church basement to make ornaments. On the following Sunday, December 20, during worship, the kids will come forward and decorate the tree in the sanctuary with their ornaments. We need *help the kids make their ornaments* during worship. Contact Mark Tucker if you can help.

Kids' Christmas Craft Sale! Sunday, December 13

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 13** after worship. If you plan to make things this year, please let Kelli McKie know.

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!

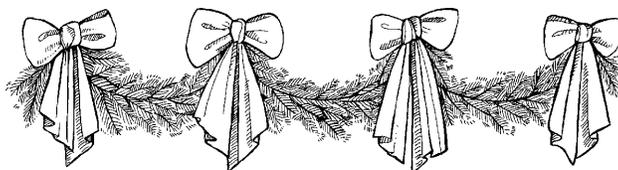
Lessons and Carols: Sunday, December 13 and Saturday, December 19

On Sunday, December 13, at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Richard and Jane Winter in the Central West End (see print copy), and on Saturday, December 19 at 6:30 p.m. at Greg & Cayce Zavaglia (see print copy), 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.

We strongly encourage you to bring a guest to this event! Our Lessons and Carols is a wonderful, low key way of introducing non-Christians to the circle of warmth and light that Christ creates in the world when he gathers his people into communities known as churches.

Plan on coming—Sign up! We'll begin sign-up sheets on Sunday, December 6.
Sunday, December 13 and Saturday, 19.



Women's Ministry Fellowship & Crafts -

Saturday, December 19th - 10:00 am to 1:00 pm at Milligan House

Ladies, come join us for a time of crafting and fellowship! Bring your knitting, sewing, scrapbooking, or even last minute Christmas cards -- whatever! Tables and chairs will be provided. Bring snacks for yourself or to share if you want to nibble on something while you craft. And feel free to invite friends from outside Old Orchard; this can be a great opportunity for outreach!

Questions: call or email Amy Butz. (see print copy for phone & e-mail)

Christmas Caroling: Sunday, December 20, 6:00 p.m.—



On Sunday, December 20, 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 meet afterwards at the home of Jerry & Sue Taussig (see print copy for address) for hot chocolate and treats.

Please bring a plate of Christmas eats, too!

—Witness—

God has called us to witness to the truth of his incarnation in Jesus Christ. Remember that we are to be “stepping out of the boat,” toward Jesus Christ, trusting that as we screw up our courage to share him with others he will be helping us and we will not sink. Think about inviting friends, neighbors, and classmates to some of the things we're doing during Advent and Christmastide, especially to one of the Lessons & 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 6, after worship. *Sign up to bring food!*

*Lessons & Carols

Sunday, December 13, 6:30 p.m. (at the Winters) and Saturday, December 19 (at the Zavaglias) Invite friends and neighbors! Sign-up to attend. Invitations are also available.

*Neighborhood Caroling

Sunday, December 20, 6:00 p.m., meet at Milligan House.
Refreshments afterwards at the home of Jerry & Sue Taussig.
Bring a platter of treats.

*Christmas Day Worship

Friday, 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!

