



Advent Guide

FIRST BAPTIST *of* CHARLESTON

Preparing for the Coming of the Savior

*“For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given;
and the government shall
be upon His shoulders;
And His name shall be called*

*Wonderful, Counselor,
The Mighty God,
The Everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.”*

Isaiah 9:6

In these pages, you will find simple ways to share the true meaning of Christmas with people in your home, your community, and throughout the world. Our prayer is that you will find the calendar helpful in making plans and the ideas and explanations useful in beginning some new traditions with your family or community. Shared times strengthen families and friends and can become traditions that we cherish and continue for generations. Build some memories by beginning a new tradition in this most Holy season. May God richly bless you this holiday season. As always, may all praise, honor, and glory be given to God alone!

Dedication

This revised Advent guide is lovingly dedicated in memory of Nell Lassig who was the original author of “Christmas at First Baptist” in the mid 90’s. Nell loved on children and families of First Baptist and the community for many years as a Bible teacher at FBS and as a director of children’s Sunday School at FBC. Her desire was to teach God’s Word and to keep the focus of Christmas on Jesus, our Savior.

SUGGESTED DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR ADVENT

December: 1 John 1:1-5

From the Beginning Jesus was the Light Shining in the Darkness

December 2: Genesis 3:8-15, Romans 3:23

The Fall but a Promise of a Deliverer

December 3: John 1:6-13

The Hope of Becoming Children of God

December 4: Jeremiah 33:14-16

Branch of David to Bring Salvation

December 5: Zechariah 6:12-13

The Royal Priest who will Bring Peace

December 6: Isaiah 7:10-14

Virgin Birth Foretold; God with Us

December 7: Isaiah 11:1-10

Reign of the Davidic King

December 8: Isaiah 40:1-11

John the Baptist's Ministry Foretold; Jesus as Shepherd

December 9: Isaiah 52:7-10

Promise of Good Tidings Heraldng Salvation

December 10: Malachi 2:17-3:5

The Bringer of the New Covenant

December 11: Isaiah 53:1-6, Romans 5:8

The Messiah will Take on our Sin and Punishment

December 12: Micah 5:2-4

Bethlehem Foretold as Place of Birth

December 13: Isaiah 9:2-7

For unto Us a Child is Born- the Prince of Peace

December 14: Luke 1:5-17

Prediction of John's Birth to Zechariah

December 15: Luke 1:26-38

Angel's Visit to Mary

December 16: Matthew 1:18-25

Joseph's Dilemma

December 17: Luke 1:39-45

Mary's Visit to Elizabeth

December 18: Luke 1:46-56

Mary's Song of Praise

December 19: Luke 1:67-80

Zechariah's Prophecy after John's Birth

December 20: Mark 1:1-8

John's Ministry

December 21: Philippians 2:5-11

The Humility and Incarnation of Jesus

December 22: Galatians 4:4-5

Jesus Came at the Appointed Time

December 23: John 3:16-17, Romans 6:23

God's Gift

December 24: Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Eve

December 25: Matthew 2:1-12, Romans 10:13

Wise Men Seek the King

The Advent Season

The word advent means “coming”. The advent season is a time of prayer, scripture reading and reflection during which Christians focus on the coming of Christ as a baby. More than 2000 years ago, He was born in Bethlehem in the fullness of time... a time set by God the Father. Through advent, we commemorate and celebrate His birth and His life, which fills us with His word, His love and His Spirit. The season of Advent also invites us to reflect on the second coming of Jesus Christ... the unfulfilled promise of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The season of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Day. A time is set aside each Sunday for family worship and lighting of the candles on the Advent wreath. Family worship can include reading scripture, praying, and singing favorite Christmas carols. Because the Christmas season can be overwhelmed with commercialism, celebrating Advent together as a family or in community allows us to focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

Christmas is a time for establishing family traditions. Suggestions in this booklet are made for you to add to your existing traditions. These suggestions can be modified to suit the needs of your family or small group.

THE ADVENT WREATH

The wreath is a circle representing the unending love of God. Evergreens adorn the wreath symbolizing the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. The four colored candles set in the wreath represent the four Sundays before Christmas Day. The fifth candle, the Christmas Day candle is called the Christ candle. This candle is white and is placed in the center of the wreath. Traditionally, purple candles are used the first, second, and fourth Sundays in Advent. A pink candle is used the third Sunday.

THE ADVENT CANDLES

There seems to be no universal tradition for the color or the names of the advent candles. Some have called the four candles history, new birth, the Second Coming, and faith. Some use promise, light, love, and hope. In this booklet, the four candles are labeled according to First Baptist Charleston tradition: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. A fifth Candle, the Christ Candle, is celebrated on Christmas Day.



First Sunday in Advent

THE HOPE CANDLE

This candle represents the long years when God's people waited and yearned for the Birth of their Savior. In First Baptist tradition, this candle also represents the Hope for the people of all nations to recognize Jesus Christ as Savior.

The First Baptist family celebrates the ingathering of the Lottie Moon Christmas offering during the season of Advent. This offering is used throughout the world to bring the hope of Jesus Christ to those living in darkness (See end page for more on the life of Lottie Moon.)

Child: (Read from the Bible) Jeremiah 33:14

Parent: As we begin preparing for Christmas, we are joyful, for Jesus did bring light into a world of darkness. He is the light that shines through all those who believe in Him. Jesus is the reason for our Hope. God's promise to send a savior was fulfilled with the birth of Jesus.

Child: Read Matthew 5:16

Parent: Our Advent wreath reminds us of the meaning of Christmas. It is in the form of a circle to symbolize God's eternity. The greenery symbolizes new life. The candles represent the light that came into the world through Jesus.

Child: Jesus taught us to forgive others as He has forgiven us. I light this first candle on our Advent wreath to remind us of Jesus' teaching about forgiveness and the hope that Jesus brings to all people who need His forgiveness. (Light the candle.)

Parent: Read Hebrews 11:1

Prayer: "O God, You have shown Your love to us in the birth of the Holy Child at Bethlehem. Help us to welcome Him with joy and to make room for Him in our busy days. Help us to share the Hope of Jesus with others this Christmas season. Amen."



Second Sunday in Advent

THE PEACE CANDLE

The second candle symbolizes the preparation made to welcome and cradle the Christ Child, who will bring God's peace.

Parent: Last Sunday, we lit the first candle on our Advent wreath to remind us of Jesus' teachings about forgiveness and hope as God's promise of a Savior to save us from our sin is fulfilled. Today, we relight that candle to remind us again of God's forgiveness and promise. (Light the candle)

Child: This is the second Sunday of Advent. Christmas is now a week nearer. Today we light the second candle to remind us of peace. (Light the candle)

Child: In the Bible we read about a heavenly host singing of peace on the night that Jesus was born. (Read Luke 2: 13-14)

Parent: Jesus taught us to do our best and to love one another. When we love and forgive one another as Jesus taught, it is not difficult to live in peace. (Read John 13:34)

Prayer: "We thank you, God, for the Christmas night so long ago when the angels sang of peace on earth. Help us to live our lives in such a way that we will not only live in peace with our family and friends, but that through us, peace may be found even by strangers. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Third Sunday in Advent

THE JOY CANDLE

The third candle is the Joy candle. It represents the wonderful and joyous news of the Savior's birth.

Parent: Today is the third Sunday of Advent. As we light the third candle on our wreath, we notice the light growing brighter. This reminds us that the birthday of Jesus, who brought light to the world, is coming near. Read Isaiah 9:6.

Child: We will relight the first candle, the Candle of Hope, to again remind ourselves of God's forgiveness and our hope for the people of all nations to know Him. (Light the first candle)

Child: The second candle, the Candle of Peace, is lit to remind us that Jesus wants us to live in peace. (Light the second candle)

Parent: Today we will light the third Advent candle, the candle of Joy. It was God's plan that Jesus should come into the world as a baby and grow into a man who could teach what God is like. We feel great joy inside ourselves as we accept from God the gift of Jesus. (Light the third candle).

Child: Read Romans 15:13

Prayer: "Thank you, God, for the joy we feel at Christmas. Help us, through the love you give us, to continue to feel this joy long after Advent and Christmas have passed. Help us to show the joy we have in Jesus to others this season. In Jesus' name. Amen."

*Joy
To The
World*

Fourth Sunday in Advent

THE LOVE CANDLE

The fourth candle is the candle of love and the reminder that God loves us so much he gave his Son to us. Read John 3:16.

Parent: How joyous we feel as the day of Christ's birth draws near! We think about how much God loves us. God wants us to love Him and to show others the same love he has for us. Read 1 John 4:19.

Child: (Relight the first candle) The first candle, the Candle of Hope, reminds us that God kept his promise to send a Savior, and that God gave us the gift of hope which is life forever with Him.

Child: (Relight the second candle) The second candle, the Candle of Peace, tells us that God wants us to live in peace.

Child: (Relight the third candle) The third candle, the Candle of Joy, reminds us of God's love for us and the joy that is found when we show God how much we love him by loving one another.

Parent: The fourth candle, the Candle of Love, will remind us of Jesus' teaching about love. We know that because God sent Jesus, He loves us and we also know that God wants us to love one another. "Love your neighbor as yourself" is one of the greatest commandments given to us through Jesus' teachings. As I light the fourth candle, let us think of ways we can show our love in this Advent season. (Light the candle)

Child: Read John 15:12.

Prayer: "May love enter our hearts during this Christmas season, O God. May it find a good growing place there, that our lives may become reflections of the great gift of love you sent us at Christmas so long ago. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Christmas Day

THE CHRIST CANDLE

The candle in the middle represents the Savior's love. It also reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the World.

Parent: Read from the Bible, Luke 2:1-20.

Child: (Relight the four candles) These candles remind us of Jesus' teachings about HOPE, PEACE, JOY, and LOVE.

Parent: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12. Today we light the fifth candle to represent Jesus, the Light of the World. (Light the Christ Candle)

Child: I am glad God sent Jesus to the world.

Prayer: "Thank you, God, for keeping Your promise to send a Savior into the world to bring light into the darkness. Help us remember Jesus' teachings about hope, peace, and love. Let the light of your love shine out from us to others. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus.



Celebrating Christmas with Your Family

Following are suggestions for various ways to celebrate Christmas. Whether you are a family with small children, a single adult, a family without children....no matter your place in this season of your life, you will find helpful suggestions for celebrating Advent and keeping Jesus, the reason for the season, as your focus throughout the holidays.

ADVENT WREATH

Make the lighting of the candles a family devotional time. An Advent Wreath can be simply made with five candles and candle holders, placed in a circle on a plate. Add greenery from your yard or use artificial greenery. Advent wreaths can be purchased, but the focus should be on what the Advent wreath represents, not on how fancy the wreath is.

ADVENT CALENDAR

Draw a calendar for the month of December. Make it large enough to add pictures or words to describe what you will be doing on each day to celebrate Jesus' birth. Suggestions: Passages of scripture, loving things to do for someone, prayer concerns, names or pictures of persons to pray for, visit, phone, or write. Place a picture of the nativity on December 25. As the members of your family share ideas about what should be put on the calendar, you will find yourselves discussing values, concerns and faith.

JESSE TREE

The Jesse tree is a tree adorned with ornaments representing Old Testament prophecies and events leading up to the birth of Jesus. It tells God's plan of salvation and reveals Jesus from the time of creation to His birth. Simple kits can be ordered online or created on your own with a little research.

PRAYER GARLAND

Use construction paper or make chains out of strips cut from full-color magazine pages. The paper is much easier to paste than construction paper and the variety of designs

and colors make the chains look especially festive. Arrange chains around a Christmas tree or hang them as holiday decorations. To help count the days until Christmas, paste 25 links together. Write the name of a family member, friend, missionary, or ministry on each one. Cut off one per day until Christmas. Pray for the person or ministry as each is cut from the chain.

MAKE A WREATH

Make an evergreen wreath for a doorway. Even better, make one for someone who is unable to get out of their home easily.

MAKE CHRISTMAS CARDS

From old cards or wrapping paper, cut Christmas pictures to glue on paper for a Christmas card. Children can paint, color, or simply draw cards and print a simple message inside. Take or mail the cards to a shut-in, a nursing home or to a children's hospital. A list of FBC homebound members can be obtained through the church office.

CHRISTMAS CARDS AS PRAYER REMINDERS

Any Christmas cards that you receive as a family can be used as prayer reminders throughout the Advent season or throughout the year.

MAKE CHRISTMAS WRAPPING PAPER

With cookie cutters or sponges cut into Christmas shapes, stamp designs onto brown or white paper. Tempera or poster paints can be used for painting. Paper with a child's handprints makes special wrapping paper for a family member.

NATIVITY SCENE

Allow your child to help set up your Nativity scene at home. Talk about the characters and tell the story as you set up the scene. You can place this in their room to remind them each day of the reason for this season.

COOKIE CUTTER ORNAMENTS

Mix 2 cups baking soda, 1 cup cornstarch, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cups

cold water. Combine all ingredients in a saucepan until smooth. Bring to a boil and let boil for one minute, stirring until clay is the consistency of mashed potatoes. Pour out onto a tray and cover with a damp cloth until cool. Knead lightly. Use immediately or store, wrapped air-tight, in the refrigerator. Warm to room temperature before using. This clay can be molded into shapes or rolled on waxed paper and cut with cookie cutters. When dry it can be painted.

MAKE CHRISMON DECORATIONS

Chrismons are Christmas decorations with Christian symbols on them that can be used to tell the Christmas story. This can be a very meaningful family activity and something children will cherish in later years. First Baptist Church decorates a Chrismon tree with decorations made by ladies of the church over 40 years ago. Patterns and info can be found online.

MAKE DECORATIONS

Older children might enjoy cross stitching or making ornaments from various things from nature or craft supply stores. Look for ideas in popular home and craft magazines or visit a craft store for ideas and supplies.

CHOOSE A COMMON CONCERN

Are the members of your family concerned about something that is happening in your community, state, nation, or world? Choose one concern and work during Advent to become more knowledgeable and to find ways you can help. Make it a prayer focus in your family. Some ideas to focus on might include: world hunger, nutrition, peacemaking, homeless people, emergency relief programs, crisis centers, or Bibles to be sent to people around the world in their own languages.

A PROMISE

God made a promise to His people. Children can make a special promise to someone this Christmas. The promise may be to clean up his/ her room each day or to take out

the trash. Encourage children to think of a good promise that they can make to help someone else feel better. Have the child write the promise on a piece of paper or draw a picture of what they choose to do. Then give the paper to the person they want to help.

SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS!

Have a stationary box filled with paper, markers, pencils, envelopes, stamps, etc. Let each family member design and send their own Christmas card to a needy person, neighbor, friend, stranger, etc.

Bake Christmas cookies together and share them with their neighbors, shut-ins, or someone special to your family.

Go Christmas caroling to homes of neighbors, shut-ins, or older people. Take cookies or cards to share at each home. Visit a nursing home or retirement center. (Call first.) Bring Christmas cards, pens, and stamps. Offer to address and mail cards for these people. You might also sing carols and offer refreshments.

MISSION OFFERING

Missionaries are all around the world telling people about Jesus. Make a mission offering bank for your family with a small can. Decorate the sides with fabric or paper. Use the bank to save money for the church Lottie Moon offering for international missions. Read about Lottie's work and this offering named in her memory at the end of this booklet.

CHRISTMAS PRAYER WALK

As a family, take a walk outside one evening before Christmas. Look at Christmas lights in the neighborhood and pray for your neighbors. As you walk, talk about the things you most enjoy about Christmas as a family. If a walk is not practical, take a car ride.

LEARN PRAYERS, SCRIPTURE OR SONGS TOGETHER

Advent is a time when younger children can learn songs, Bible verses, and prayers that are used in worship

services. Teach one phrase at a time, with everyone participating.

COLLECT CHRISTMAS BOOKS AND STORIES

Each year, shop for a new Christmas book. Read the book with your family, friends, and visitors. After Christmas, pack the book away with your Advent decorations to be brought out again next year to enjoy.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Allow children to decorate a tree of their own. A small artificial tree without lights for their room works well.

SING CHRISTMAS SONGS TOGETHER

Hum or sing traditional Christmas carols. You can use CDs, tapes, or song books. Lifeway Christian Bookstore and Family Christian Bookstores have a wide selection of Christmas music.



Recipes for Children

COOKIES AND SWEETS

Peanut Butter Balls

- 1 cup peanut butter
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 1 cup graham cracker crumbs

Mix first 3 ingredients together. Shape into small balls. Roll in cracker crumbs.

Christmas Butter Cookies

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter or margarine
- 2 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 egg
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 or 3 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Mix first five ingredients. Sift together flour, baking powder, salt. Add sifted ingredients to first mixture. Mix well. Chill for ease in handling. On a floured board, roll dough to 1/8 inch thickness. Cut with your favorite Christmas cookie cutter. Bake 350 degrees for 8-10 minutes. Sprinkle with plain or colored sugar.

Thumbprint Cookies

- 1 package sugar cookie dough
- 1 small package chocolate chip morsels

Roll cookie dough in small balls and put on a cookie sheet. Press your thumb into each ball. Place a chocolate chip morsel in each thumbprint. Bake at 8-10 minutes or until light brown.

TASTY SNACKS

English Muffin Pizza

- 1 package English muffins
 - 1 jar pizza sauce
 - Grated cheese
- Split the muffins. Spread pizza sauce on muffin

halves. Add cheese. Place under broiler until cheese is melted. As an option, you may want to add meat, pepperoni, cooked hamburger, ham or chicken.

Christmas Gelatin

1 large box red or green gelatin
2 ½ cups hot water
1 can fruit cocktail with juice

Dissolve gelatin in hot water. Add fruit. Pour into a cookie sheet with sides. Refrigerate. When gelatin is firm, Christmas cookie cutters to cut out shapes. Place shapes on dessert plates and top with cool whip.

Lottie Moon's Plain Tea Cake Recipe

As a way to earn the trust of the people and show her good will, Lottie Moon made teacakes for the children in her village in China. Once the children ate the cookies, they would take Lottie to their homes where she would share the gospel with their mothers. The children began calling Lottie, “the cookie lady”, instead of “foreign devil”.

Plain Tea Cake (as made by Lottie Moon)

- Three cups sugar
- One teacup of butter
- One teacup of sour milk
- Four pints flour
- Three eggs, well beaten
- Half a teaspoon of soda
- Flavor to taste, roll thin, and bake in a quick oven

Adapted Recipe

- 2 cups flour
 - 1/2 cup butter
 - 1 heaping cup of sugar
 - 1 well-beaten egg
 - 1 tablespoon cream
- Cream the butter and sugar. Add the egg and mix well. Add the flour and cream. Dust a board with flour. Roll the dough very thin. Cut cookies with a round cookie cutter. Place on a buttered or nonstick cookie sheet. Bake at 475 degrees for about 5 minutes.



Reaching the World for Christ

LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING AND SEASON OF PRAYER FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

During the months of November and December, First Baptist Church turns its attention to a time of prayer and giving for Southern Baptist missionaries and their work on international mission fields. This tradition began over one hundred years ago when Lottie Moon, a missionary to China, challenged Southern Baptists with the following words: “Is not the festive season, when families and friends exchange gifts in memory of The Gift laid on the altar of the world for the redemption for the human race, the most appropriate time... to send forth the good tidings of great joy into all the earth?” The Christmas offering for foreign missions was then established. In 1918, the offering was named in memory of Lottie Moon.

Born into an aristocratic Virginia family, Lottie Moon left the comforts of home and responded to God's great commission call. This "calling" would sustain Lottie in Northern China as she happily taught throngs of children and as she traveled from village to village doing evangelistic work for forty years. In 1887, Lottie Moon wrote, "I am more and more impressed by the belief that to win these people to God we must first win them to ourselves." Lottie Moon put her words into action and she prayed for Southern Baptists to realize the great hopelessness that enshrouded most of the world. In 1912, during a time of war and famine in China, Lottie gave the last resource she had in order to save the lives and souls of the Chinese—her own food. She silently, courageously, starved and her Christian brothers and sisters saw the ultimate sign of love: She gave her life for others. On Christmas Eve that year, Lottie, age 72, died aboard a ship bound for the United States.

What better time of the year than the Season of Advent to commit oneself to pray and give so that the Good News can be spread to all people, everywhere? Today, more than 3600 "Lotties" serving in international missions depend on our prayer and financial support. One hundred percent of the Lottie Moon Offering goes directly to the missionaries and their needs. What better gift to bring to the Christ child than the gift of commitment to sharing the Good News through sacrificial prayer and sacrificial giving?

