



Christian Education
Bulletin Insert
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Many families have an **Advent wreath** on the dining table for the four weeks before Christmas Day and light the candles for the appropriate week at the main meal on Sunday. Very young children will be able to learn this simple rhyme to say when the Advent candles are lit:

- Week 1 One purple candle burning.
 Three more left to say,
 "Three weeks to get ready
 And wait for Jesus' birthday."
- Week 2 Two purple candles burning.
 Two more left to say,
 "Two weeks to get ready
 And wait for Jesus' Birthday."
- Week 3 Three purple candles burning.
 One more left to say,
 "One week to get ready
 And wait for Jesus' Birthday."
- Week 4 Four purple candles burning.
 Four bright lights shine to say,
 "Jesus' birthday's almost here.
 Oh, merry, merry Christmas Day!"

Explain some of the symbolism of the wreath also. It is round because a circle doesn't have a beginning or an end and reminds us of God's love. He always loves us. His love doesn't begin or end. The wreath is made of evergreen branches. Evergreen trees stay green all year round and remind us that God always loves us. You may wish to say this prayer after the candles are lit:

Heavenly Father, As we get ready for Christmas our days are very busy. Help us to make time to think of what Christmas really means: of how you love us all so much that you came to us as a tiny, helpless

baby, born in a stable. May we love you as Mary did, may we serve you like Joseph and may we worship you as the angels worshipped you. Amen.

Another Advent activity

Put a manger without a baby in a prominent place - use a shoe box or similar if you don't have one. Put a small bag of straw beside it. On the first Sunday of Advent put the names of members of the household in a container and ask each person to draw one. (If they get their own name try again) During the week everyone secretly does nice things for the person whose name they drew. For everything they do they are able to put a piece of straw in the manger to make the baby's bed more comfortable. Each week draw again. On Christmas Eve lay the baby in the manger.

Christmas Cards

Christmas cards are expensive to send and too often we don't take enough time to appreciate them. Try putting each day's cards unopened in a specially decorated box or basket. Then, at supper time, have each member of the family choose a card to open, read aloud, and pass around. Talk about the message and the person who sent the card. If possible show a picture of the sender so that young children realize the cards are not from the mail carrier! A short prayer for the sender might also be said.

Family letter writing evening with older children

Ahead of time, find writing paper that is a little different - maybe use a notepad cut in a star or Christmas tree shape (these are sometimes available in stores which sell to teachers) or paper in a bright Christmassy colour.

Begin the evening with a whacky meal. Perhaps you could eat the meal backwards, starting with dessert, or have breakfast at supper time for a change. Then get started on the letters. Either write individual notes to friends and family who live at a distance, or enclose a note with a family form letter. If you can add a family photo your message will be enjoyed even more. You will find it's much more fun to take on this project together.