



## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

# CONNECTING FAMILIES TO GOD AND EACH OTHER



December 2<sup>nd</sup> marks the start of Advent and a change in seasons in the Christian liturgical calendar. Advent is the season in the church when get our hearts ready for the mystery of Christmas. We have four weeks to get ready. Many churches use the color **purple** or blue to designate this time of preparation.

During these four weeks, we journey with the holy family to the city of Bethlehem and the manger that holds the Christ child, the promised king. It is a time to turn inward and to focus on our relationships with God and neighbor. We ask, “God, how are you calling me to change? How can I prepare my heart and home for your promised coming?”

Advent is also about **waiting**. Our ancestors had to **wait** a very long time for the coming of Christ. The Holy family, shepherds, and wise men went on a very long journey to find the Christ child. Our faith stories remind us that while it is hard to **wait** and to journey on long difficult roads, these times present us with an opportunity to pay attention to how God is moving in and through us and others as we travel towards Bethlehem and prepare to greet the promised child. This is what the season of Advent is all about- getting ready, **waiting**, anticipating, and looking forward to the birth of our Savior- Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

During the season of advent, we invite you and your family to **wait** and get ready for the Mystery of Christmas together. Find a way to mark the time together- either using an advent wreath or an advent calendar. Talk about what it feels like to **wait**. Find ways to get your hearts ready to greet the Christ child.

**I wonder: How will your family get ready as you **wait** for the mystery of Christmas?**

Listed below are several ideas and resources to help you in this work.

As we grow together I invite you to share your thoughts, prayers, wonderings, and experiences with #growingtogetherumc, or send an e-mail to: [tcampen@riotexas.org](mailto:tcampen@riotexas.org). We would love to hear how you and your family are experiencing God together. There are also additional resources on the Rio Texas Family Faith Formation website too: [riotexas.org/family](http://riotexas.org/family).

Grace and Peace, Tanya



## Did you know?

The church is in the season called **advent**. The color for this season is **purple**. This is the time when we prepare our hearts for the mystery of Christmas. We have 4 weeks to get ready to greet the Christ child.

## Look: Candle

Candles are often used to symbolize Christ's light in the world. They are a symbol of hope in the difficult moments. During Advent, many Christian churches light the candles of the [advent wreath](#) as a symbol of this Holy time of waiting. We light a candle as we wait for the coming of Christ. When you see a candle this advent, stop and take a moment to talk to God:

*God, thank-you for Jesus- the light of the world. Help us to be patient as we wait for Christmas.*

## Listen: Jesus' Birth and the Shepherd's Visit

**Scripture:** Read [Luke 2:1-20](#) together. You might choose to read one verse a day or break this into several different sections, reading together throughout the month. Take turns reading, giving everyone who desires an opportunity to read.

**Memory Verse Activity:** Print [Luke 2:11](#) and post on a bathroom mirror, or in a note in a lunchbox. Remembering the angel's promise: "Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord."

## Recommended Books:

- [Hope is an open heart by Lauren Thompson \(PK-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade\)](#)
- [Waiting by Kevin Henkes](#)

## Wonder

- I wonder what this Scripture/story tells us about God?
- I wonder what this Scripture/story tells us about us?
- I wonder what this Scripture/story tells us about waiting?
- I wonder how it feels to wait?

## Work

**Sharing Christ's love while we wait:** Sometimes it is really hard to wait. While you wait, you can spend time and share God's love with others. This advent season we invite you to mark the days until Christmas as you share Christ's light with others. Every day, mark off a day on the calendar, and write or draw a person who you shared Christ's love with that day. Take time to pray for those people together. You might choose to send them a card too. On Christmas day celebrate each of these people as you pray for them again together.



## Pray

*God, thank-you for Jesus- the light of the world. Help us to be patient as we wait for Christmas.*

## Bless

How to bless your family: Blessings help us connect with and affirm one another. It is an opportunity for God's people to remind each other that God is with us and that God loves us. Blessings look different from person to person and family to family. Find a time each day to bless the members of your family. This might be at meal times, bedtime, or at the start of the day. One way to offer a blessing is to make the shape of a cross on your family member's forehead or hand while saying words of your choice. Each month this newsletter will suggest a family blessing for you and your family to use.

*Make a vertical line: **God loves you.***

*Make a horizontal line: **God is with you while you wait.***



## Loving Neighbor

As we wait for Christmas, we can discover and plan ways to share God's love with others. U.M. ARMY provides families an opportunity to join others as you join in the holy work of helping others. This advent look to warmer months and plan to participate in a U.M. ARMY FAMILY experience: [June 29-July 3, 2019 at Wesley UMC in Harlingen](#)

- There is room for families of all ages and sizes to serve together as we are #SentOut into the community providing much needed repairs to area non-profits and churches.
- We have a great leadership team including families from Pflugerville, Austin, and San Antonio set and ready to lead you into service at the Care Cottage, Loaves and Fishes as well as other important places and spaces in Harlingen that need a little TLC.
- We will have separate spaces for families with small children to sleep, so please indicate if you are traveling with a little one on your group/family registration  
<http://riotx.umarmy.org/register/>

Questions? Contact [jennymonahan@umarmy.org](mailto:jennymonahan@umarmy.org)

# GROWING TOGETHER FAMILIES – ADVENT



- As you wait and practice patience, take time to draw or journal about your experience. What are you waiting for? What does it feel like to wait? Talking to God can help the time pass as you celebrate God's love for you today!
- Share your experience with a trusted friend or adult (for children).
- Have an exciting faith story to tell? Do you have a family faith practice you want to share? Let us know! E-mail your stories to: [tcampen@riotexas.org](mailto:tcampen@riotexas.org) and maybe your story will appear here in an upcoming issue of Growing Together: Families.



- *Come Worship With Me: A Journey through the Church Year* by Ruth Boling (PK-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade)
- [\*Deep Blue Bible Story Book Christmas\* by Daphna Flagel and Brittany Sky \(PK-Kinder\)](#)
- [\*Passing It On\*](#) by Kara Lassen Oliver
- [#pictureadvent](#)
- [Pockets](#) (A devotional magazine for children)



We wonder what you wonder about!  
Submit your questions to: [tcampen@riotexas.org](mailto:tcampen@riotexas.org) and someone from our conference family will share their reflections in an upcoming issue of Growing Together Family.



## GROWING TOGETHER FAMILIES – ADVENT

*Texas Conference. We invite you to share this resource in its entirety with anyone who might find the information helpful in their family faith formation process. Please credit the author when you share with others. You can contact the writer and curator for this resource, Rev. Dr. Tanya Campen, at [tcampen@riotexas.org](mailto:tcampen@riotexas.org)*