

Advent

2015

Consider & Prepare

Consider

The following Advent segments are designed to help prepare your church family for the Christmas celebration. In the midst of the busyness, these segments create spaces to pause and refocus on Jesus.

The series includes

- The Countdown
- Promises Kept
- God With Us
- The Best Gift Ever

You will need to allow approximately fifteen minutes each week for the segment.

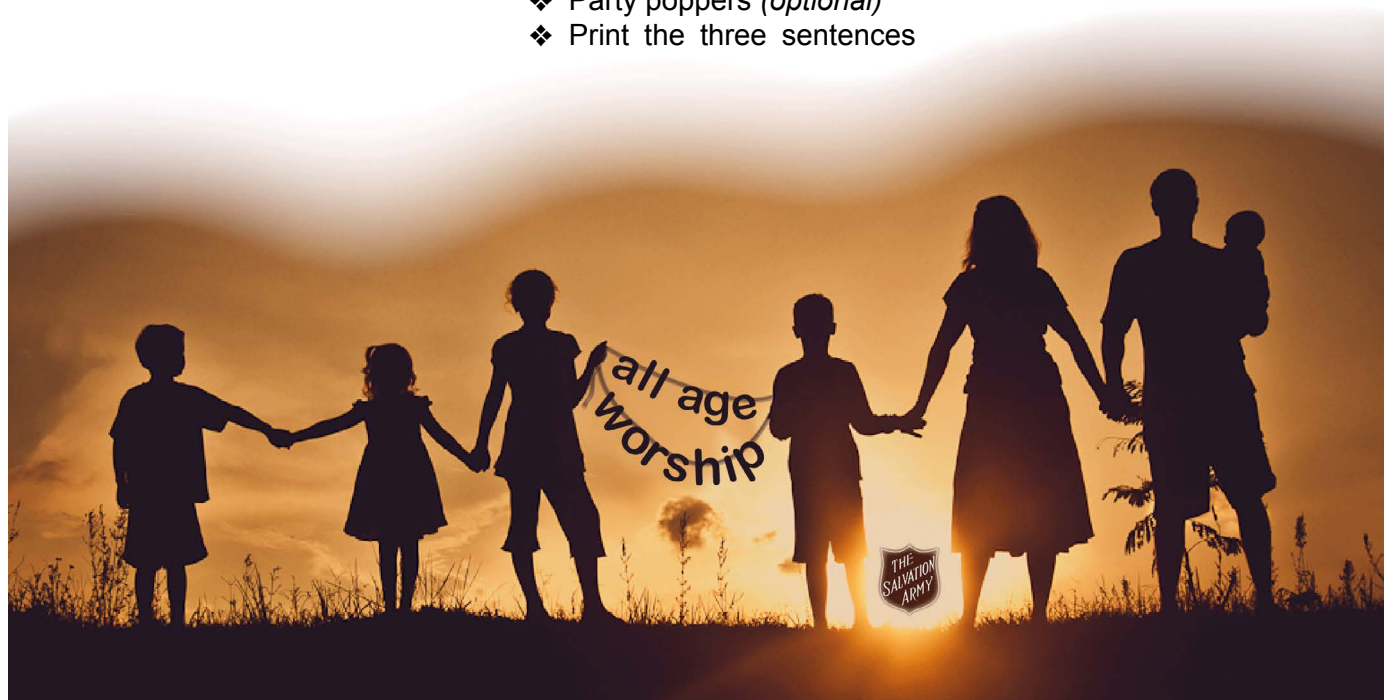
Each week begins with a moment of celebration. You can use the ideas suggested each week or find other ways to involve everyone in celebrating.

Prepare

- The Countdown
 - ❖ Countdown timer screen *(optional)*
 - ❖ Party poppers *(optional)*
 - ❖ Print the three sentences

that are contained in the table in Appendix A

- ❖ Cut up the table so that one word is on each piece of paper
- ❖ Put the words for each sentence into one of three gift boxes
- Promises Kept
 - ❖ Countdown timer screen *(optional)*
 - ❖ Streamers to wave *(optional)*
 - ❖ Print and cut out the verses in Appendix B
 - ❖ Put the verses onto Christmas gift cards *(optional)*
 - ❖ Punch a hole in the corner of each verse card
 - ❖ Tie a piece of string, tinsel or ribbon to each of the Old Testament verses
 - ❖ Hide the verse cards around our space before you begin *(optional)*
- God With Us
 - ❖ Countdown timer screen *(optional)*
 - ❖ A selection of baby products, which can be identified by using



- senses other than sight, such as Baby powder
- ❖ Baby food
- ❖ Soft toy
- ❖ Rattle
- ❖ Blanket
- ❖ Large cloth to cover baby products
- ❖ Blindfold
- The Best Gift Ever
 - ❖ A large box wrapped in brown paper with a bow
 - ❖ Invitations to be handed out for your Christmas service

Advent 1 – The Countdown

Either have a countdown timer screen running or lead the congregation in a countdown from 10! You may want to all say 'Happy Advent' when you reach zero. You may like to give everyone a 'party popper' to pop.

Introduction

Today marks the start of Advent. Advent begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas. It is a time about waiting, as Christians anticipate the hope that comes in the form of a Saviour on Christmas Day. The name 'Advent' is derived from the Latin word 'adventus', which means 'arrival'. This season anticipates the arrival of Jesus! Advent gives us a chance to look back to the birth of Christ more than 2,000 years earlier, it also remembers Christ's presence here with us now, and it anticipates His promised return.

Ask

- **What do you countdown to?** (*Birthdays, holidays, Christmas, baby being born*)
- **What do you have to wait for?** (*Bus, appointment, family to get ready, retirement*)
- **What do you do while you're waiting?** (*Read the paper, check Facebook, keep busy, get impatient, prepare for the event*)
- **Is it easier to wait when you know when the waiting will be over?** (*yes/no*)

Link

Although the first Christmas was full of extraordinary and surprising details it wasn't a badly planned event. Lack of preparation wasn't the reason for

Jesus being born in a stable. The events leading up to Jesus' birth were planned and talked about in the Old Testament of the Bible.

Activity

Have three Christmas gift boxes ready with the sentences from Appendix A pre-cut into pieces inside. Ask for three volunteers or three small groups depending on your group size / abilities. Set a countdown timer and ask each group to put the sentence together before the timer stops!

Group 1: Around 4000 years ago – A rescuer was promised to Abraham

Group 2: Around 3000 years ago – A king was promised to David

Group 3: Around 2000 years ago – The promise came true with Jesus

Have each group read out their statement.

Wrap Up

God spent a long time getting ready and preparing for the first Christmas. He made promises and they were fulfilled. As you start to prepare for this Christmas season remember that God planned the first Christmas for thousands of years so that we may all have the ultimate Christmas gift.

Advent 2 – Promises Kept

Start with the countdown to Advent again – with 'Happy Advent' when you reach zero. Hand out streamers for people to wave.

Introduction

Today is the second Sunday of Advent. Last week we reflected on the anticipation of the countdown to Jesus' birth. Today we will look at the promises God made about the arrival of a Saviour and how every one of them was kept.

Ask for two volunteers from your congregation – try to have at least one child.

Ask

- What exact time will you brush your teeth next Tuesday?
- What is the name of the person you will marry? (if unmarried or a child)
- Who will be the Prime Minister of Australia in 2045?

- Where will you be living in 2025?

Link

It is hard to predict what will happen next week and even more difficult to know about what will happen in 2 years time. As for any idea of what will happen in 200 years time, no one can predict that especially with any degree of detail and accuracy. Most of us know the story of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, but what some of us may not know is that His birth, right down to the last detail, was a fulfilment of a number of Old Testament prophecies. These prophecies were written between 1450 BC and 430 BC. The prophecies speak of timing, location and details of birth. Who but God alone could plan such things?

Activity

Print out the following Scripture verses and punch a hole in the corner of each one. Tie a piece of string to each Old Testament verse. Hand the cards out to your congregation or hide them around your space and ask people to find them. Ask each person with an Old Testament reading with a string to come out to the front and read their verse aloud. Have them read in numerical order. After each Old Testament verse, read the corresponding New Testament verse and thread it onto the string. When the second Old Testament verse is read, tie it to the first string. Keep adding them as the activity unfolds. By the end you will have all the promises connected to each other with their fulfilment. *(You could use tinsel or Christmas ribbon and make each verse of scripture on a gift tag and put it up in your place of worship as a decoration and reminder.)*

1. The Promise to Abraham

Genesis 22:18 – You have obeyed me, and so you and your descendants will be a blessing to all nations on earth.

Matthew 1:1 – Jesus Christ came from the family of King David and also from the family of Abraham. And this is a list of His ancestors.

2. The promise to David

Jeremiah 23:5-6 – Someday I will appoint an honest king from the family of David, a king who will be wise and rule with justice. As long as he is king, Israel will have peace, and Judah will be safe. The name of this king will be The Lord Gives Justice.

Matthew 1:17 – There were fourteen generations from Abraham to David. There were also fourteen

from David to the exile in Babylonia and fourteen more to the birth of the Messiah.

3. Born in Bethlehem

Micah 5:2 – Bethlehem, you are one of the smallest towns in the nation of Judah. But the Lord will choose one of your people to rule the nation someone whose family goes back to ancient time.

Matthew 2:1 – When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king.

4. Worshipped by Kings

Psalms 72:10-11 – May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him. May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts. May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him.

Matthew 2:11 – When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, His mother, they knelt down and worshipped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him.

Wrap Up

It is clear that the birth of Christ was no accident. Although it may have seemed slightly disorganised with Jesus being born in a stable in a place far from home and visited by lowly shepherds it was all planned in detail. We can see how each event was promised and fulfilled.

Once man disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden we damaged our relationship with him, so God chose to come to us. This was the greatest gift ever. His birth is only the beginning. Jesus life, Jesus' death on the cross, His resurrection and the hope of His return are all part of the gift. It is recorded in the Old Testament that Jesus was to be called Immanuel – God with us. He is with us today. As we continue our countdown to Christmas remember that God has given us the greatest gift as he promised and we don't have to wait to enjoy it!

Advent 3 – God with us

Start by doing your Advent countdown from 10. Today ask the congregation to do a Mexican wave as you reach zero then call out 'Happy Advent'

Activity

Provide several different baby products and cover them with a cloth (e.g. *Baby powder, nappy or soft toy, rattle, baby food*). Ask for a volunteer from the congregation. Blindfold the volunteer and tell them that they will need to use their other four senses to decide what the things have in common. Let them smell the powder, taste the food, hear the rattle and feel the nappy or soft toy.

Ask

What do these things have common? (*They all belong to a baby.*)

Link

Last week we talked about how God keeps His promises. After man broke the relationship with God His special plan was to come down to earth as a human, as a baby. This baby would grow up and then die on the cross for our sins. His name is Jesus, the one who God promised would come. He has lots of different names, and each name helps us to know more about who He is. We will learn one of Jesus' special names today.

Ask

Can anyone tell me what their name means? (*Allow time for a couple of people to share.*)

Wrap Up

Parents spend a lot of time deciding what to call their baby. A very long time before Jesus was even born, God had told Isaiah what his name would be. Isaiah said, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

Immanuel means 'God with us'! He is God with skin on. God had a plan to save His people from their sins and He chose to send a precious tiny baby to do this! This advent season let's give thanks for the gift of baby Jesus who came to save us from our sins.

Advent 4 – The Best Gift Ever

Being the final countdown for our Advent series be as creative as you like to celebrate. You may like to ask everyone to start counting in a whisper and gradually build up to a massive shout out of 'Happy Advent' as you reach zero.

Ask

- Have you ever made a Christmas wish list?
- What is the best gift you have ever received?
- What made it so great?
- What is the worst gift you have ever received?
- What did you do with it?

Link

The best gift ever given on earth was by God. It was sent from heaven. All the money in the world could not pay for it. It was given to millions of people and many have discovered how amazing it is. It will last forever and never wear out or need replacing. The Gift is Jesus – God's son. *John 3:16* tells us that – God loves the people of this world so much that he gave His only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.

Activity

Wrap a large box in brown paper or butchers paper and tie a bow around it. Invite people in your congregation to come and write their name on the gift and say 'Thank You' for the gift of Jesus. Ask each person to take an invitation to your Christmas Service and write the name of someone they know who would love to receive the best gift ever this Christmas on it!

Wrap Up

This Christmas as you hear the Christmas story told – remember that it isn't a fairy-tale but a real life event that was planned by God from the beginning of time. God's gift to humankind is the Gift of Immanuel – God with us! It will never wear out, lose its cool or lose its value. It's not just for one person. We can share this greatest gift given with everyone. This week why not tell someone about this gift and the way it has changed your life. It's the best re-gift you will ever give. If you haven't yet received this gift please don't go home today without asking someone here how you can get it.

Finish with a final 'Happy Advent'.

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|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Around | 4000 | years | ago | a |
| rescuer | was | promised | to | Abraham |
| Around | 3000 | years | ago | a |
| king | was | promised | | |
| Around | 2000 | years | ago | the |
| promise | came | true | with | Jesus |

| Old Test | New Testament |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Genesis 22:18</i> – You have obeyed me, and so you and your descendants will be a blessing to all nations on earth.</p> | <p><i>Matthew 1:1</i> – Jesus Christ came from the family of King David and also from the family of Abraham. And this is a list of his ancestors.</p> |
| <p><i>Jeremiah 23:5-6</i> – Someday I will appoint an honest king from the family of David, a king who will be wise and rule with justice. As long as he is king, Israel will have peace, and Judah will be safe. The name of this king will be The LORD Gives Justice.</p> | <p><i>Matthew 1:17</i> – There were fourteen generations from Abraham to David. There were also fourteen from David to the exile in Babylonia and fourteen more to the birth of the Messiah.</p> |
| <p><i>Micah 5:2</i> – Bethlehem, you are one of the smallest towns in the nation of Judah. But the Lord will choose one of your people to rule the nation someone whose family goes back to ancient time.</p> | <p><i>Matthew 2:1</i> – When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king.</p> |
| <p><i>Psalms 72:10-11</i> – May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him. May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts. May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him.</p> | <p><i>Matthew 2:11</i> – When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshipped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him.</p> |