

## **Prepare the Royal Highway**

ideas for preparing for Jesus in these days of a Pandemic crisis

How will you celebrate the birth of Jesus this year? During the days before Christmas, we focus on getting ready, setting the table, remembering that the Promised One comes who will be peace, hope, love and joy. Many are wondering if that will be possible this year. With news of new closures on outside activities, smaller gatherings, and even restrictions on family gatherings the thoughts of the traditional Christmas services, overflowing with members and guests, lots of singing and the glowing of candles is undergoing redevelopment. On these pages, you will find ideas and resources for activities that you might use. These are activities and suggestions that you can be incorporated in your devotions and worship - virtually (on-line) or in person at church or home. They are offered as ways to embrace this season of preparing for Jesus, the King of Kings, the Promised one!

### **Advent Calendars**

#### **Preparing the Royal Highway Advent Calendar**

Each day in Advent identify one activity that you can do to help prepare the way for Jesus. Some samples: Learn a verse of a Christmas carol, make cookies for your neighbor, design and decorate Christmas cards for neighbors or residents in nursing homes, take box of donuts to the fire house, sweep the steps and walkway of your neighbor's home, keep a daily Christmas prayers for others list.

### **Gospel of Luke Advent**

Each day during Advent, read a chapter in the Gospel of Luke. Identify one or two words that touch you as you are reading. Create an Advent paper chain by writing the words down on strips of paper. Link them together to create your Gospel of Luke Advent Chain.

### **Advent Pen Pal**

Develop a pen-pal or buddy system with members of the congregation and school families. Encourage them to connect at least once a week to check in and see how each is doing. Plan a surprise gift of service – perhaps make cookies, rake a yard, or run an errand.

### **Advent Wreath**

Find greens (pine, fir, holly, magnolia) and create a wreath. Add four candles to your wreath. You can use a candle form for this that you can find at Hobby Lobby or a craft store or you can make the center large enough to hold four candles in a jar or four battery-type candles. Each week during Advent you light a candle. Google Advent wreath and learn about it's meaning.

### **Christmas Caroling**

Share your favorite carol: During on-line services in Advent and Christmas, invite families and household units to sing their favorite carol. With a signup sheet in advance, you would be able to ensure that there were no doubles.



### **Christmas Card Story**

Repurpose old Christmas cards into the story of Christmas by creating a flip book to tell the story. Visual Faith has templates for this. It can be a wonderful Advent evening family activity.

### **Christmas Tree Decorating**

Each family makes a special ornament for the Christmas tree at church. They send it in or drop it off. The Church tree is decorated with these special ornaments which now symbolize the gathering of the church community in a very special way during this COVID-19 season.

### **Holy Saints Days**

Celebrate the Saints Days of this year's Advent Season: St. Nicklaus (12/6), St. Lucia (12/13), and Katie Luther (12/20). You could check out Christmas traditions in Holland, Sweden, and Germany. You might want to make a special food associated with each of the saints: a piece of candy, ginger cakes, and a pretzel.

### **Nativity Activities**

#### **Journey to Bethlehem**

When you set up your Nativity, take Mary and Joseph and put them in a room far away from the Stable. Each night in before Christmas, move them a little closer. When you gather on Christmas Eve, place them in the stable.

#### **No Baby Jesus Yet – Where is He?**

In this activity, you set up the Manger Scene, but someone hides baby Jesus. You wait until Christmas Eve or Christmas morning and then there is a wonderful search mission to find Baby Jesus before you exchange gifts.

#### **Take a Picture of Your Favorite Nativity or your family Nativity and Share**

Send a picture of your favorite Manger Scene to [sed@se.lcms.org](mailto:sed@se.lcms.org). We will share it on line.

### **Visual Faith Advent and Christmas**

There are wonderful resources for creating bookmarks, garlands, and gorgeous works of art in the Visual Faith Community at <https://www.visualfaithmin.org/seasonal?category=Christmas>

### **Virtual Worship Services**

For each service, invite a household to serve as the designated responder. It allows for different voices to take part in the service and provides an opportunity for those who are on-line to connect with others.

### **Advent/Christmas in a Box**

In preparing your worship services, gather the bulletins, some special treasures, and a battery-operated candle. Place the in a bag or box and distribute to members of the congregation. Encourage them to use the during on-line worship. Help them be part of the visual experience of preparing for Christmas.

*Note: We recognize that increased restrictions may impact some of these suggestions, please take the necessary precautions of keeping social distance and mask-wearing as you join in preparing the royal highway this season.*