

2020

multiageadventresource



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About this Resource

This Multi-age Advent Resource encourages households, multi-age small groups and multi-age congregations to engage together around some of the Advent lectionary readings for each week of Advent. You will notice that these are not the classic 'birth narratives' of Christmas. Rather, they are texts that provide an opportunity to be stimulated by a greater breadth and depth of biblical material relating to Advent.

Thus, this is not a traditional 'Advent calendar for families' or a list of suggestions for 'Advent decorations and activities' generally for your house. For some of these kinds of activities, see the final page of this resource.

How to use this Resource

To enjoy and benefit from these household readings, here are a few tips...

- > Trust the process of doing things together as a rich and formative experience, even if there isn't a nice neat 'point' at the end.
- > The concrete props and activities are a means for opening the text and creating a space where questions and wondering and sharing can happen. Don't rush through to the end. Take your time, and relish the opportunities that the chaos and interruptions to the flow of the text provide.
- > You may find that some parts of the text are exposed while others are submerged in the process of the interactions. This happens even when we read in the most orderly and methodical way – as our natural biases are drawn to some phrases and words and images and elide others. That's ok. Because these readings involve taking turns and action, they are generally very repeatable. If a text is worth reading once, it's worth reading again.

What's included

Week 1

Advent Justice	Shaping and shaped
Mark 13:24-27	Poster
Mark 13:24-27	Compare and Contrast
Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19	Refrains

Week 2

Advent Justice	A Peaceable Kingdom
John 1:19-28	Rewind Story #8
Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13	Highlighting Threads
Mark 1:1-8	Finding Signs

Week 3

Advent Justice	Seeds and Soil
John 1:6-8	Household Light Challenge
John 1:19-28	Identities
1 Thessalonians 5:16-22	Phrase of the Days

Week 4

Advent Justice	No place like home
Matthew 2:1-11	Welcome Mat Story #1
Psalms 89:1-4, 19-26	Sing out loud
Luke 1:26-38	Tangible Reading

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Household Activities Advent Week 1

Advent and Justice 1 - Shaping and shaped

Isaiah 64:1-9

One of the most striking images that the writer of Isaiah uses is this: We [the people] are the clay and you [God] are the potter

How are we shaped through our relationship with God? How can we then shape the world and change the injustices in the world to better reflect God's love?

Invite everyone person to take a stick of plasticine. (You can get packs of 12 different colours in most supermarkets or art supplies or toy shops.) Invite each person to rub it between their fingers for a while, initially thinking about a situation in the world/their world that is unfair. Continue until the plasticine is soft and malleable, with the further invitation to think about how the situation might be shaped for a fairer outcome. Older people might like to think about a social issue that has changed for the better in their lifetime.

The plasticine can then be moulded into a symbolic shape to reflect the issue or just into any shape they like. The playing with the clay is part of the reflective process.

Give each person the opportunity to place their plasticine on the same sheet of cardboard, building up a collective sculpture. Invite people to share something about the change they would like to see or have seen in the world/their world. Leave the plasticine creation on display for the week.

Mark 13:24-27

Background

Although this part of the Bible mentions the sun and moon and clouds and wind – it's not a weather report; and even though it mentions stars and the heavens (which we'd call the solar system) it's not a science report either.

This is 'apocalyptic' writing: it is high drama, high symbols. The first part shows everything being rocked and changed. If the sun didn't shine what would be affected in our lives? EVERYTHING!

The description at the beginning is like a big 'Ta-da' chord that introduces something dramatic happening on stage, but it's not the big thing itself. It's like the crack of thunder and lightning in between the Count.

The 'main event' is the coming of the 'Son of Man'.

The "weather warnings" are just the 'sound and lighting effects'.

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Activity 1 - Poster

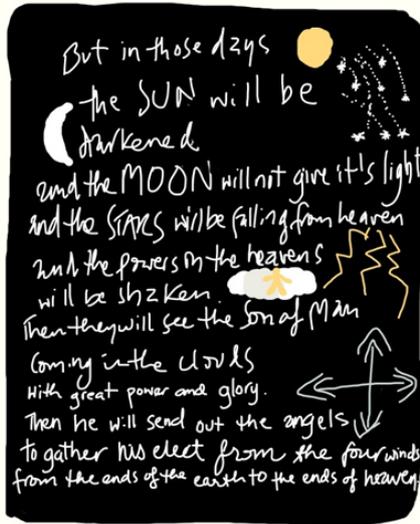
You will need:

- > black card (one large piece and some smaller offcuts)
- > light coloured oil pastels or crayons
- > Bibles

Write out Mark 13:24-27 in white pastel or crayon on the large piece of black card – take turns so that everyone's handwriting is featured on your poster. Add pictures of the elements mentioned in the text – sun, moon, stars, 'powers in the heaven (lightning)', 'Son of Man' (use your imaginations) angel/messengers, wind, gathered people.

Add black fold-over flaps to cover each of the elements.

With your finished poster, perform a reading in which you hide and reveal the pictures matching the reading. If you have household members who are into filming, make a video with stop motion on the changes. In the spirit of the apocalyptic dramatic genre of the text, add a sound track! If you are pleased with your production, send it to chris.barnett@ctm.uca.edu.au and we'll post it on the Children and Families website.



Activity 2 - Compare and Contrast

Mark 13:24-27 paints a picture of dramatic impact on the whole cosmos when Jesus returns. It is an astrophysics showstopper, as you'd expect, but how does it compare to the incarnation, the birth of Jesus?

- > Divide a poster into three columns and make notes (including visual notes!) in each column detailing the descriptions of Jesus' coming in the birth narratives of Jesus (Luke 2 and Matthew 2) and the picture painted here in Mark 13.
- > Talk together about why there might be contrasts and similarities between the way Jesus's arrivals are described.
- > Mark's gospel doesn't give any space to telling the story of Jesus' birth – but does mention Jesus' coming again in several places. Speculate on why this might be...

Activity 3 - Refrains

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

Psalms 80 has a refrain that is repeated between sections of the psalm (v3, 7, 19). Practice the refrain together a few times.

Psalms 80:3

**Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

Either decide on some dramatic inflections or set it to a catchy tune – whatever you do, don't read it like a shopping list. This is drama! This is passion!

Read the passage responsively, reading the refrain together.

Extend this to make your own psalm about where you see God and where you long to see God's ways in the world, repeating the refrain in between short 'verses' of your own creation.

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Hicks#mediaviewer/File:Edward_Hicks_-_Peaceable_Kingdom.jpg

Household Activities Advent Week 2

Advent and Justice 2 - A Peaceable Kingdom

Isaiah 40:1-11

This week's image is of God as one who both stands strong alongside us and comforts us.

He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Without God beside us it is often hard to keep going. Sometimes it is hard to keep reading about conflicts in the world. Sometimes it is hard when things don't change at school or at home in the way that we'd ideally like. But having a vision of what sort of world we'd like to see and how we might work towards it is an essential step.

Have a look at this image of 'The Peaceable Kingdom', one of many paintings on the same theme by Edward Hicks. In it is a vision of an ideal world. Invite each person people to consider the painting (either on a screen or providing copies) and what their vision of an ideal world might be. What do they see in the painting?

For more info see: <https://www.stphilipscathedral.org/>

Activity 1 - Rewind Story #8

Time to get ready (John 1:19-28)

Follow up activities

- > make a list of 'getting ready activities' extending John the Baptist's starter list in this story (Get fair, don't be bullies, give others a shot, share stuff around)
- > make our own John the Baptist model from found objects
- > John called people to make their ways straight. Who does call out this message today? Identify some contemporary 'John the Baptists'. If you can't think of any, read up on the participants in the 'Love Makes a Way' movement. Some have been arrested – another parallel with John the Baptist.

Activity 2 – Highlighting Threads

Psalm 85: 1-2, 8-13

Work in pairs or as individuals, depending on how many people are participating and their ages. Give each person or pair a different coloured highlighter and allocate each a letter from the following: S; F; P; G. Make an enlarged print page of the text. Each person/pair highlights the words on the page that begin with their allocated letter. If you are working with varying levels of literacy, use this process to help everyone orientate well to the vocabulary of the text.

When the highlighting process is completed, deliver a communal reading in which one person reads all of the non-highlighted text, and others call out the words they have highlighted. For repeat readings, reallocate 'colours'. Hear how the 'threads' of words weave together.

After reading a few times, put the text away, and see what kind of recall you have collectively.

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Ps 85:1 LORD, you were **favorable** to your land;
you restored the **fortunes** of Jacob.

Ps 85:2 You **forgave** the iniquity of your **people**;
you **pardoned** all their sin. Selah

Ps 85:8 Let me hear what **God** the LORD will speak,
for he will speak **peace** to his **people**,
to his **faithful**, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

Ps 85:9 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who **fear** him,
that his **glory** may dwell in our land.

Ps 85:10 Steadfast love and **faithfulness** will meet;
righteousness and **peace** will kiss each other.

Ps 85:11 **Faithfulness** will spring up from the **ground**,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.

Ps 85:12 The LORD will **give** what is **good**,
and our land will yield its increase.

Ps 85:13 Righteousness will **go** before him,
and will make a **path** for his steps.

Activity 3 - Finding Signs

Mark 1:1-8

This part of the bible tracks the 'signs' of God's plans from way back to just before Jesus arrives.

Print the sections of text from the template provided and hide them in the places suggested (or equivalent) around where you live.

As a group, go searching for the verses.

At each location read the verse you have found; keep them in order as you go. When you have gathered them all, assemble them in order together and read the complete reading.

Allow time for questions and wonderings as you move from place to place.

Verse	Location
The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.	Where your newspapers are kept
As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,	In your letter box where messages are sent
who will prepare your way;	With your shovels or brooms that can clear a path
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:	Among some wilderness bushes in your garden or a nearby park
'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight;'"	The straightest path, driveway or corridor where you live
John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.	Among some wilderness bushes in your garden or a nearby park
And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.	By an outside tap
Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist,	In the wardrobe, attached to a coat hanger
and he ate locusts and wild honey.	In the pantry, next to the honey.
I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."	In the bath
He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.	In your shoe cupboard

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Household Activities Advent Week 3

Advent and Justice 3 - Seeds and Soil

This week we are offered the image of the garden. God offers life and the promise of justice in places where we think there may be no hope.

Fill a large bowl with soil (or potting mix from a hardware store) or do this outside in the garden. Hand each person a sunflower seed and invite them to say one thing this seed needs to grow (soil, sunshine, water). All the knowledge is stored in the seed, but with soil, sun and water, life can take hold. What do we need to do to keep working for God's justice in the world? Encourage and affirm each other's suggestions (eg. compassion, taking action like writing letters, telling others about the problem, inviting people to be part of the solution). Each seed on its own doesn't seem like much. But working together we can grow a garden. Change in the world takes place when many people come together and say that things are not right. Remember the image of the garden this week.

Activity 1 - Household Light Challenge:

John 1:6-8

In this passage, John is described as 'testifying' to the light (and later the gospel will make it clear that 'the light' refers to Jesus, the light of the word). But John is not the light himself. He shows people where to find the light.

Without walking around your house, together can you 'testify' to where all the sources of light are (light fittings, light switches, candles, torches, lava lamps... whatever sources of light you might have!)

When you think you have a 'true testimony' to the light in your house, go through and check.

As you prepare for advent this week, be conscious of the place of light in your celebrations. Light is often thought of as a 'decoration'.

John the Baptist's role wasn't to point to a decoration, but to witness to, identify, point out, declare the truth of Jesus' light-giving life.

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Activity 2 - Identities

John 1:19-28

> Play a game of 'Who am I?' or 'Celebrity head' using superhero identities

John the Baptist was an odd one, and it made people try to figure him out. Jesus also provoked the same set of questions. Some people asked John if he was 'Elijah' – a radical, courageous, miracle-working prophet from Israel's history. Elijah's reputation was characterized not only for religious action, but also for standing up against the evil and corrupt politicians and leaders of his time.

The people of Israel had hopes that God would send a new Elijah – rough and tough to take on the Romans who had over run their country, and sort things out. Their longings for Elijah were a bit like hoping for a super hero to fly in and rescue the day.

When people met John the Baptist, he reminded them of Elijah's outspoken courage, but John constantly refused to be made into a superhero – he pointed to the one who would really save.

Check out these other parts of Mark's gospel where Elijah is mentioned – there's quite a bit of Elijah 'fanboying' going on.

Mark 6:15

Mark 8:28

Mark 9:11

Mark 9:12

Mark 9:13

Mark 11:32

Mark 15:35

Mark 15:36

Activity 3 – Phrase of the Days

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

This reading is made up of 7 short catchphrases – one for each day of the week.

- > 1Th. 5:16 Rejoice always,
- > 1Th. 5:17 pray without ceasing,
- > 1Th. 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances;
- > 1Th. 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit.
- > 1Th. 5:20 Do not despise the words of prophets,
- > 1Th. 5:21 but test everything; hold fast to what is good;
- > 1Th. 5:22 abstain from every form of evil.

At the start of the week introduce the reading.

Try memorizing them collectively, by allocating one or two to each person in the group.

When you are familiar with them, play a game of charades, taking turns to mime one verse each, while the rest of your household guesses which it is.

Throughout the week, feature a different verse each day by:-

- > writing it in a high traffic zone window or the bathroom mirror (use window chalk or whiteboard marker)
- > taping a copy of the verse to a frequently used item in the pantry or fridge (perhaps the milk, or the coffee jar)
- > write it in chalk on your path or driveway
- > write it onto multiple sticky notes and leave these in various places around the house.

At dinnertime turn the phrase of the day into a prayer. Encourage household members to name ways they have seen the verse in action across the day/week.

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Household Activities Advent Week 4

Advent and Justice 4 - No place like home

This week our image is of God who provides a home for us.

Invite each person to share some things about their home. What do they like about it? How did they come to live there? How is it different/the same as other homes they might have lived in? What would their ideal home be like?

Jesus was born in a very temporary home. What must it be like to have to leave your home?

Around the world people are having to leave their homes for fear of being killed or hurt. Brainstorm together some of the things you could do that might make it easier for such people to find a safer place of "home". For practical ways to help, contact the Justice and International Mission Unit – jim@victas.uca.org.au or (03) 9251 5271 – for more ideas.

Activity 1 – Welcome Mat Story 1

[Guess where God was? \(Matthew 2:1-11\)](#)

Activity 2 - Sing out loud

Luke 1:47-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

The two readings for today are both Psalms - songs which dramatise and express recognition of God's presence and action around us, with us and upon us.

These psalms are examples of the healthy practice of going 'over the top' in passion, emotion and demonstrative action when talking about God.

Have a hilarious and serious attempt at turning these texts back into spontaneous songs - or at least "song-like" phrases.

Each take turns at 'singing' a line - ham it up, use gestures, repeat words for emphasis, extend your range, vary your rhythm, vary your musical styles (operatic, country and western, rhythm & blues, gregorian chant.) Don't try to 'compose', just give expression to your chosen line. Wild applause at such glorious musical offerings is entirely appropriate!

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Activity 3 – Tangible reading

Luke 1:26-38

This is a deliberately ‘mess-making’ reading, blowing feathers and sparkles and paper around, to highlight the impact of the news in this reading being like being blown up.

Gather the items required from the list below. Open a bible or two if you have more than one in your household, to Luke 1. Mark the starting spot for who ever is going to read. Explain that in this story are some unexpected appearances.

With each line that is read from the bible, first of all place the ‘tangible’ items on to the open pages of the bible. Either the person who is reading, or another member of your household will need to blow away the items before the verse can be read.

This should create a little liturgical cycle of

- > open bible
- > surprise appearance
- > blowing breath
- > mess
- > reading

Items: feathers, gold sequins, small pieces of paper with words (torn from newspaper); streamer roll, torch, party popper

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,

feathers blown from the pages of an open bible

27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’*

gold sequins blown from the pages of an open bible

29 But she was much perplexed by his words

words on tissue paper blown from the pages of an open bible

and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.

31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’

Throw a long streamer as far as you can

34 Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’*

35 The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born* will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

One person shines a torch, while others use their hands to make shadows on the bible.

36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.’

Fire party poppers

38 Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her

Additional Advent Resources and Activities

- > [Why Christmas?](#)
- > [Pinterest Advent & Christmas Ideas](#)
- > [Busted Halo Advent Surprise calendar](#)
- > [The Lost Sheep](#)
- > [Advent in 2 Minutes](#)
- > [Advent Ideas from Barnabas](#)
- > [Uniting World](#)
- > [Multi-age Service UCA SA](#)

Acknowledgements

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