

# ADVENT

Begin this series the week before the first Sunday in Advent.

1. THE ADVENT RING
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## THE ADVENT RING

### **MAKE THE CONNECTION!**

Ask the children if they have an Advent Calendar at home ready to count down to Christmas. Ask them what it looks like and what they are going to do with it. Why have they got one? What are they waiting for? Why?

Emphasise that it is important to remember that we are counting down to Jesus' birthday. The

church counts the weeks to Christmas using something very different to the calendars that we use at home - what? Can they remember from last year? or if they have not seen one in school have any of them seen one in church? The church uses an Advent Ring.

Produce the ring you have prepared without candles and show it to the children. Ask them what is missing - the candles! ( Just bring out the 4 red candles and place them in the ring.) The candles all mean something, can they remember what? If not, then it doesn't matter because you will be talking and thinking about each candle and lighting one each week as you prepare for Christmas.

There is something else missing - what? The large white candle in the centre. Who does this represent? Ask the children - Why do you think it is white? Why is it in the centre?

The ring is now complete and ready for the following week when Advent begins.

<p><b>PREPARATION!</b> You will need an Advent Ring! You can easily make one using an oasis ring soaked in water and then covered with evergreen foliage. Evenly space 4 candle holders around the ring, hidden in the foliage. Have 4 red candles ready to place into the candle holders and 1 white candle on a stand to place in the centre of the ring.</p>
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## **FOCUS** - The Evergreen Leaves

Point out to the children that you have used a circle of Evergreen leaves to create the Advent Ring to symbolise the everlasting and continuous love of God.

## **PAUSE FOR THOUGHT**

Give the children the opportunity to reflect on the above point and that the everlasting and continuous love of God is revealed to us in Jesus and it is His birthday that we are getting ready for.

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for His everlasting love and pray that in amongst all the preparations for Christmas we will remember that we are preparing for Jesus' birthday.

**SING** - Sing a song that celebrates Gods' love for us.

## **THE PROPHETS**

The first red candle is for the Prophets. This candle is lit to remind us that people had been waiting a long time for the Messiah.

**MAKE THE CONNECTION** " .....and he shall be called..."

Ask the children to tell you their full names, these are our proper names. Sometimes people are given a name or title that reflects their character or something they have done. We often make comparisons between people we know and famous people of outstanding achievement or character, e.g. Doubting Thomas, that person is as good as Mother Teresa, he is as good as George Best, Nelson Mandela is a great peacemaker, you are a little monkey! that boy will be the next Linford Christie etc. Before Jesus was born people called Prophets prepared everyone for what Jesus would be like by telling them what names we would call him.

## **TALK**

Read Isaiah 9: 6-7

The Prophets were people in the Old Testament who told the people that a Messiah would be sent from God to save them. What did they say he would be called?

Wonderful Counsellor

Mighty God

Everlasting Father

Prince of Peace

Isaiah 42:1-7 and Micah 4:3-4 told the people about what the Messiah (Special King) would do.

## **PAUSE FOR THOUGHT**

Did Jesus do what the Prophets said he would?

## **PRAYER**

Pray that Jesus the Prince of Peace will fill our hearts with love for each other and give us peace in our lives. Thank God for the Prophets who bravely stood up for God and gave people the hope that the Messiah would come.

# **JOHN THE BAPTIST**

## **MAKE THE CONNECTION**

The second candle is for John the Baptist. Who can tell me something about him? (Find out what the children already know). John was Jesus' cousin, many of them will have cousins. John had a very special job to do. Ask the children who tells them when special things/events are happening at home, at school, at Church, in the local area, in the world!? Who helps them to get ready for these special things/events?

It was John's job to tell everyone that the Messiah was coming and he was helping them to get ready by baptising them in the River Jordan.

## **STORY**

Read the extracts (or ask children to read) from the beginning of each Gospel that make reference to John. Start with his birth in Luke 1v5-24 and 1v57-66, Mark 1v1-8 and John 1v6-9 and 1v19-34.

## **PAUSE FOR THOUGHT**

Advent is the time of year when we prepare to celebrate Christmas and think especially hard about the time that is coming when Jesus will return. We call this His second coming. Are we ready for Jesus to return? Would Jesus be happy with the world if he came back today? What can we do to help people be ready?

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for John. Pray that we will be like John telling everyone about Jesus and helping them to be ready for when he comes again by showing them the right way to live.

## **MARY**

## **MAKE THE CONNECTION**

The third candle is for Mary, Jesus' Mother.

Play a game with the children. Ask for two volunteers. (Key Stage 2 children would probably be best). Stand them about 8 feet apart and ask one of them to turn around so their back is towards the other one and give them a book to look at. Now challenge the second child to creep up, without making a sound, tap the child with the book on the shoulder and give them a surprise. You could do this again with the roles reversed or a second set of volunteers.

Explain that this is similar to what happened to Mary.

## **STORY**

Mary was just an ordinary person doing her ordinary everyday kind of things when an Angel appeared tapped her on the shoulder and said "God has a special job for you, will you do it?" and Mary said yes! Wow! Use a children's Bible to tell the story. The Lion Storyteller Bible gives a great account of Angel Gabriel appearing to Mary. (Lk 1v 26-38)

## **PAUSE FOR THOUGHT**

Ask the children to close their eyes and imagine themselves watching T.V. reading a book, playing a game etc when all of a sudden an angel taps them on the shoulder and says "God has a got a special job for you. Will you do it?" What would you say?

## **TALK**

Many people feel that just like Mary God has tapped them on the shoulder and given them a special job. For example, Vicars and Ministers but also teachers, nurses, doctors, missionaries, writers, politicians, sportsmen, gardeners, bankers, shopkeepers, cooks etc etc....

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for Mary and pray that we would also be brave enough to say yes if God tapped us on the shoulder and gave us a special job.

# **GOD'S PEOPLE**

## **MAKE THE CONNECTION**

Ask the children if they can remember what the Advent candles have represented so far. Today, the fourth red candle represents God's people. Who are God's people?

Us! We are all God's people/children. How many people are in the hall at this time. Wow all of them are God's people/children. Ask the children to raise their hand if they know someone else who is not in the room. All of these people are God's people as well. Ask them to raise their other hand if they know someone else who is not in the room. That person is one of God's children too! This could continue by asking the children to stand, wave, shrug shoulders, nod their heads etc, if they know or have met or seen someone who lives in the next street, someone who doesn't live nearby, someone in another town, someone in another country etc. Each move represents another person (this could be chaos!) and everyone of those people is a child of God. We are all God's people, even those people who don't know about God. He knows about them, and loves them. Wow!

## **TALK**

So how many people are there in the world? The number is so big we probably couldn't think of it and all of these people are God's people. The fourth red candle is to remind us of this, that there are people all over the world thinking about and praying to God and he loves them. We must always remember this.

## **PAUSE FOR THOUGHT**

Have a large globe and lots of pictures of people from all over the world. Ask the children to sit quietly, watch and think about all the people in the world. As they do this stick the pictures of the people all over the globe mentioning different places as you place a picture on that country. These pictures could simply be pieces of paper in the shape of people coloured with different coloured skin.

## **PRAYER**

Pray for God's blessing on people all over the world. Thank God that his love is so great that there is enough for everyone in the world.

# **JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

## **MAKE THE CONNECTION**

Ask the children this question. If a room is dark what do we do? WE switch a light on!

Have a bag full of things or pictures of things that give us light and ask the children to guess what is inside. e.g. a candle, a match, different torches, a light bulb, a lantern, a lamp etc. Why do we switch the light on? So we can see our way.

## **TALK**

When God looked at the world it was dark. There was day and night but the darkness that God saw was in people's hearts, thoughts and behaviour. What sort of behaviour is dark/bad? God knew that the people needed a light so they could see the right way. God switched on that light and sent his Son, Jesus. Jesus brought light into people's hearts and thoughts and he showed them the way to the right/'light' behaviour. Jesus taught

people about God's love and how they should love one another and this love brought light to the dark world.

## **PAUSE FOR THOUGHT**

Light the white candle in the centre of your Advent ring. This candle is usually lit on Christmas day as a symbol of 'Jesus the light of the world.' Ask the children to think about the dark places that are still in the world today e.g. countries at war, places where people are very poor, etc. There may be a relevant issue in the news at this time.

Lead into...

## **PRAYER**

Pray that the light of Jesus will touch these places and the hearts and thoughts of people who are in a position to be able to change things to be good.

Read from the Gospel of John "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out." John 1 v 5. You could also read John 1 v 6-9 and make reference back to the John the Baptist candle. Read John 8 v12 "I am the light of the world."

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