

If you found this material helpful, or would like to tell us how you used it, please let us know by filling out this short questionnaire at surveymonkey.com/s/RevealYourMystery.

www.surveymonkey.com/s/RevealYourMystery.

Or, contact Elsie Rempel directly at erempel@mennonitechurch.ca



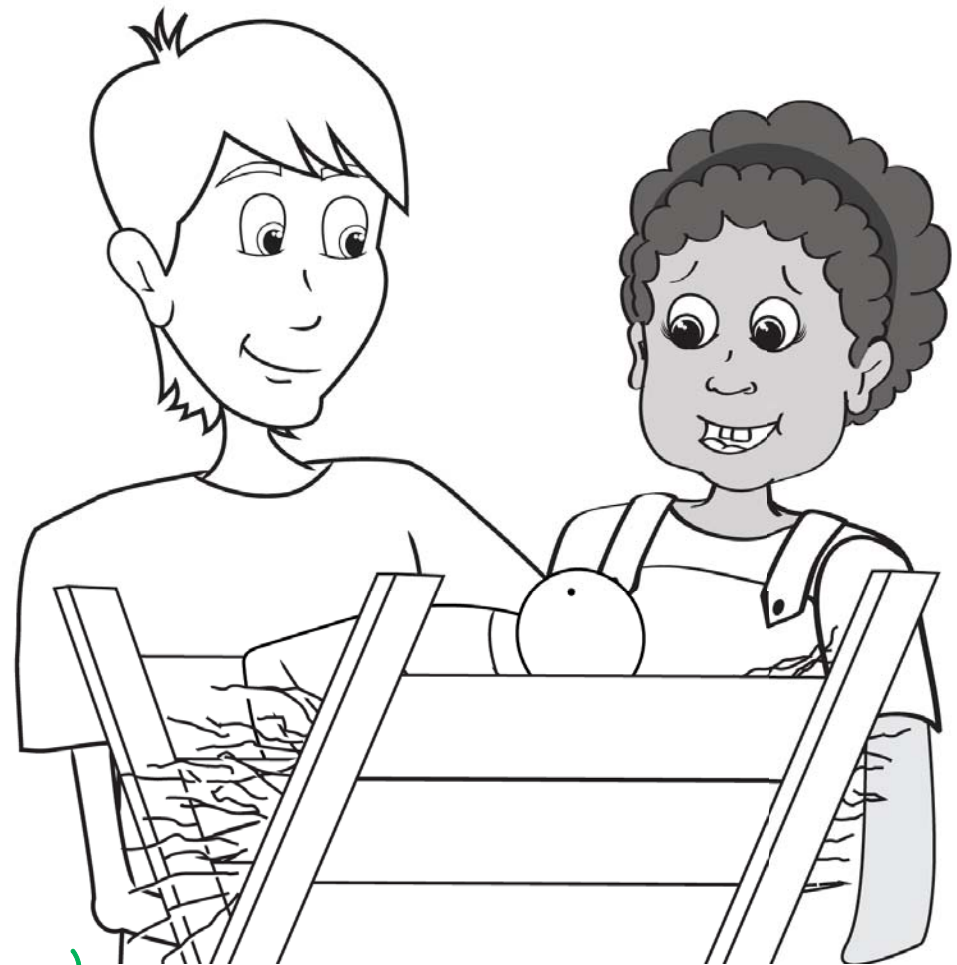
**Mennonite
Church**
Canada

600 Shaftesbury Blvd
Winnipeg MB R3P 0M4
Toll-free: 1-866-888-6785
P: 204-888-6781
F: 204-831-5675
E: resources@mennonitechurch.ca
W: www.mennonitechurch.ca

Resource Centre:
Toll free: 1-866-888-6785
resources@mennonitechurch.ca

OH, THAT YOU WOULD REVEAL YOUR MYSTERY

Advent At-Home 2014



**Mennonite
Church**
Canada

OH, THAT YOU WOULD REVEAL YOUR MYSTERY

Advent At-Home 2014

by Elsie Rempel

illustrated and designed by
Megan Kamei and Ryan Roth Bartel

Advent at Home, 2014

Oh, That You Would Reveal Your Mystery

1st Advent 2014 - Epiphany, 2015

Lectionary Cycle B

Mennonite Church Canada

600 Shaftesbury Blvd.

Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

Toll free: 1-866-888-6785

P: 204-888-6781

F: 204-831-5675

E: office@mennonitechurch.ca

W: www.mennonitechurch.ca

Adapted/compiled/written by: Elsie Rempel

Sources: Advent Writing Team, Mennonite Church Canada & Mennonite Church USA

Download additional copies at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2395

This material may be reproduced and adapted by Mennonite Church Canada congregations free of charge. Please add an explanatory note ("Used courtesy Mennonite Church Canada"), acknowledge if it has been adapted, and credit those who have done so.

HWB = *Hymnal: A Worship Book*

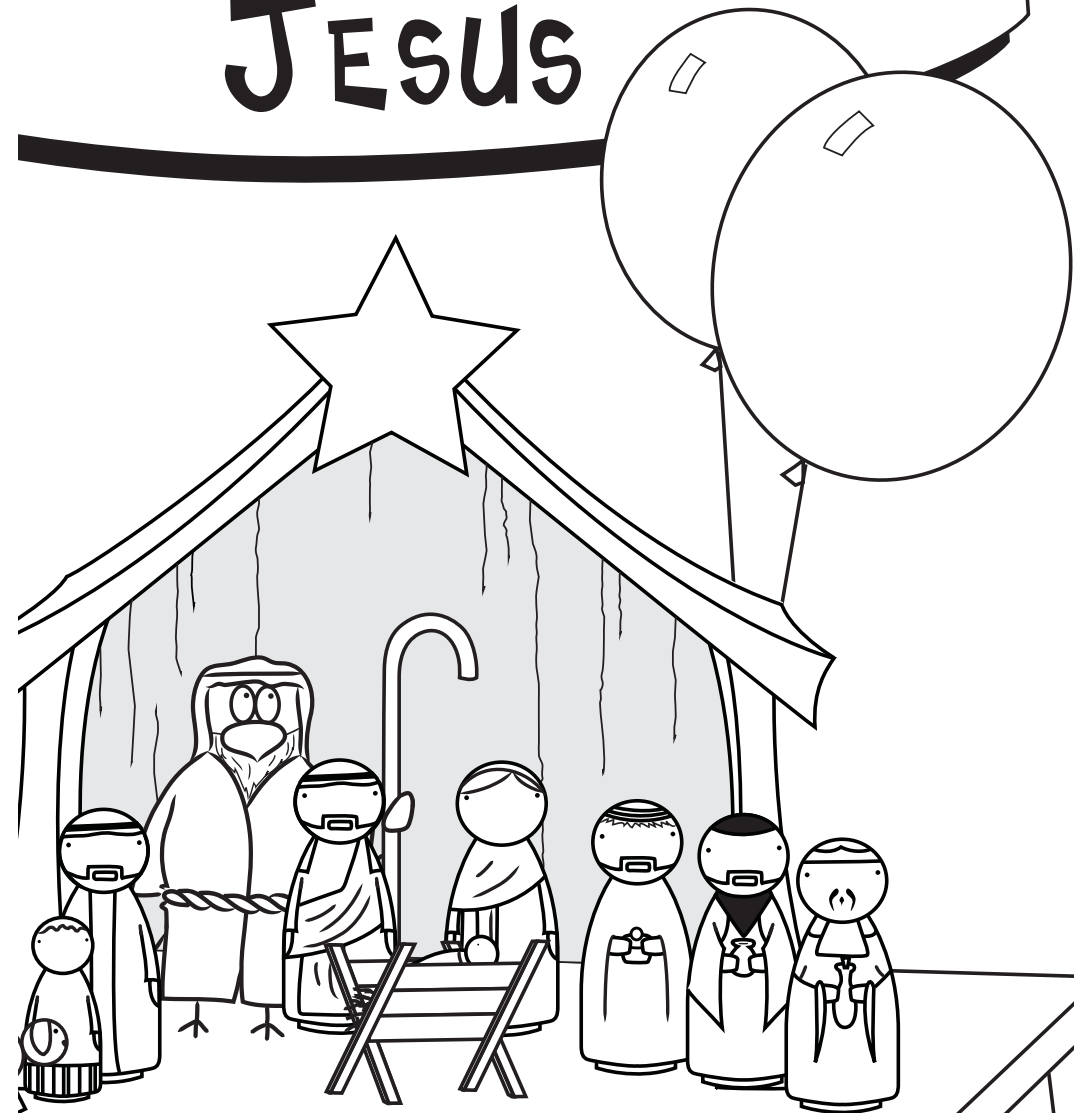
SJ = *Sing the Journey*

SS = *Sing the Story*

August, 2014

Printed in Canada

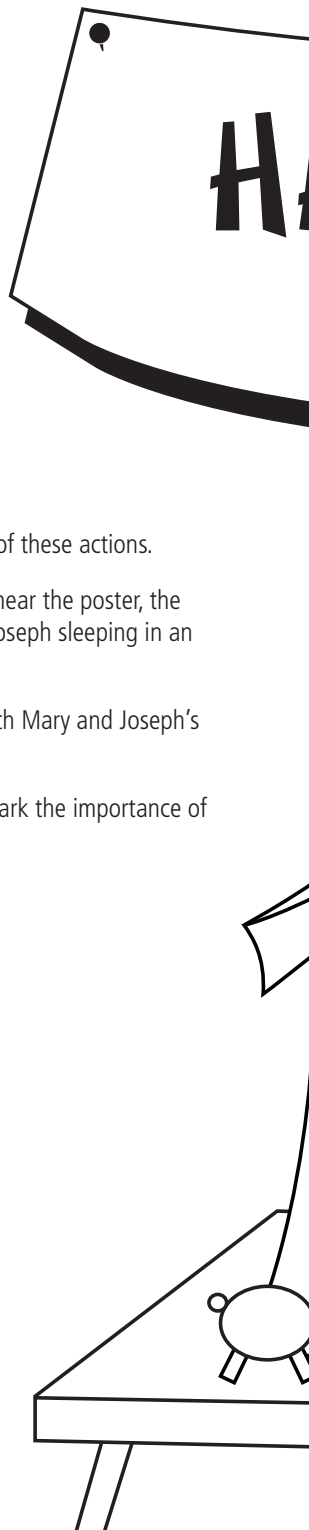
APPY BIRTHDAY JESUS



Christmas Day. December 25, 2014

Christmas home worship:

1. Light the Christ candle in your worship centre for the first time, and light a candle on a birthday cake for Jesus. Sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus, or other appropriate carols.
2. Bring Mary and Joseph from the path into the stable. Gently place the baby Jesus into the crèche, then add the angels, and bring the shepherds into the stable. Save adding the wise men for a date closer to Epiphany.
3. Sing, or listen to, an appropriate carol as you carry out each of these actions.
4. You may want to sleep in the living room on Christmas Eve, near the poster, the crèche, and the tree, as a way of identifying with Mary and Joseph sleeping in an unusual place this night.
5. Share travel stories with each other that help you identify with Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem.
6. Repeat or create your own special rituals and traditions to mark the importance of "Emmanuel - God with us".



Contents

Introduction	2
Creating holy space and time in your home.....	3
Advent 1: Nov. 30 - Dec. 6: Please Reveal Your Hope.....	4
Advent 2: December 7-13: Please Reveal Your Peace.....	6
Advent 3: December 14-20: Please Reveal Your Joy.....	8
Advent 4: December 21-27: Please Reveal Your Love.....	10
Christmas 1: December 28-January 3: Your Beauty is Revealed	12
Epiphany: January 4-10, 2015: Your Saving Mystery Revealed.....	14
Christmas Day.....	16

Introduction:

During the season of Advent, God's Christian children approach Christmas with a unique focus. We live in a culture that depreciates the value of waiting, and yet Advent is all about waiting. Like eager children waiting for the arrival of expected guests, we wait to experience the transforming presence of God in our midst. During this Advent season, you are invited to meditate on and wait for God's mysterious coming.

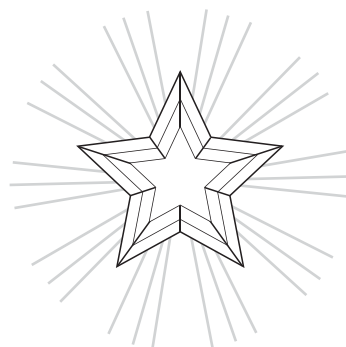
We will worship and reflect on the Scriptures in conversation with each week's subtheme. Beginning with the plea to God, "Reveal your Hope," it will continue with a focus on pleas for God's peace, joy, and love to be revealed. Then the tone changes to celebration of what has been revealed: God's beauty in Jesus and God's saving mystery at Epiphany. The prayers and activities in this booklet are adapted from the Worship resources developed by the Advent 2014 writing team from Mennonite Church Alberta for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA's magazine *Leader: Equipping the Missional Congregation*. To access *Leader* and other Mennonite Publishing Network resources, see www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/367.

Use the resource in whatever way best fits into your home's routines and life stage realities. If your family has younger children, feel free to simplify, shorten, and paraphrase the prayers and pondering thoughts. Or, consider using the *Early Childhood Birth Narrative Ritual*, downloadable at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/364.

The **pondering questions** are designed to help you listen and respond to the nudging of the Holy Spirit. Feel free to share these thoughts or ponder them silently in your heart as Mary did.

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. During week six, add the theme, "Your Saving Mystery Revealed," to flap #6, open and colour the Epiphany picture of people of different skin tones holding each other in friendship.
2. Retell the story of Mary and Joseph hiding with Jesus in Egypt to keep him safe while you clean up and put away the crèche and the other objects that have helped you celebrate Christmas. This will add a spiritual meaning to cleaning up for young concrete thinkers.
3. Read a book that shows the wideness of God's welcoming wisdom, such as *The Golden Rule*, by Ilene Cooper, ill. by Gabi Swiatkowska, NY, Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2007. Available at the Resource Centre: www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/729.
4. Add to your family Advent journal by writing or drawing from the wise men's point of view. You may want to finish it with a reflective comment by each member of your family.
5. Welcome a foreign student or lonely neighbour into your home.
6. Give a gift to the birds that have stayed around for winter. Welcome them to your yard by putting up or refilling a birdfeeder with suet and seeds.
7. Make a plan with the members of your household to find new ways of seeing God's awesome deeds in your home worship, now that the Christmas–Epiphany season is over.



Your Saving Mystery Revealed

Epiphany – January 4 -10, 2015

Call to Worship:

Speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Come, let us worship God who came to us in Jesus and fills our hearts with wonder when we realize God comes to be with everyone.

Candle lighter: *Light and review the meaning of the Advent and Christ candles. Then say:* We light this candle of your epiphany, remembering that God's saving love is for all people.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for the glory of your light. Thank you for your saving love that shines for us all. Shine into our hearts and help us welcome others with your great big love. Amen.

Candle snuffer: *Lift the candle snuffer high so the smoke can rise. Say:* This smoke reminds us of the welcoming love of God spreading all over our homes, churches, and the world. Amen.

Listening to God's Word:

Read and reflect on God's saving mystery through these daily texts: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Isaiah 60:1-3, 4-6; Matthew 2:1-12; Ephesians 3:1-6, 7-12.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- I wonder about the ways God is present and active among different faiths and peoples.
- I wonder if the wise men were able to see God's face in the stars as they followed it to Bethlehem.
- I wonder how we reflect God's welcome in our homes and congregations.

Sing or play:

SS 31 *Jesus, be the center*

SS 32 *Oh, beautiful star of Bethlehem*

Creating Holy Space and Time in your Home

The following items can help make a holy space in your home and your hearts for Christ this Advent and Christmas season. Feel free to adapt them to suit your home.

- 1. Create a Theme Poster/Advent Calendar:** with six 8.5"x11" flaps covering images of the weekly themes, downloadable at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2395. Instructions for this are in the weekly activity sections.
- 2. A Crèche:** If you don't have one, create a simple A-frame with rough lumber or bark. Add toys or play-dough figures to the scene throughout the season.
- 3. A Family Advent Journal:** The activities section provides the opportunity to reflect on the mystery of God from a different angle for each week's theme. Responses can be drawings or writing. If you haven't kept a journal before, consider one for this season.
- 4. Advent Lights:** Create or decorate an advent wreath. The wreath is a symbol of God's everlasting love. Placing a growing plant in the center would emphasize this year's focus. Purple or blue, pink, and white are the liturgical colours that symbolize the movement from repentant preparation to celebration.
- 5. A Bible and this booklet.** (NRSV has a lovely illustrated, Children's Bible - see www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/365.)



Please Reveal Your Hope

First Advent – Nov. 30 – Dec. 6, 2014

Call to Worship:

Speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Leader: Come, let us worship God who is here and desires our worship. *[pause]* God of hope, show us what you hope for, so we can hope with you.

Candle lighter: We light this first Advent candle to remind us to watch for signs of God's hope.

Listening to God's Word: Reflect on the ways God's hope is present in these texts this week: Isaiah 64:1-4, 5-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-31, 32-36.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- What signs of hope did you notice in today's reading?
- I wonder what God is hoping will happen in my life this week.
- How does looking for God's hope in everything change what I see?

Sing or play: STS 15 *Hope is a candle* or STJ 31 *He came down*.

Closing Prayer: *Use echo form or ask one person to prepare to read this prayer.*

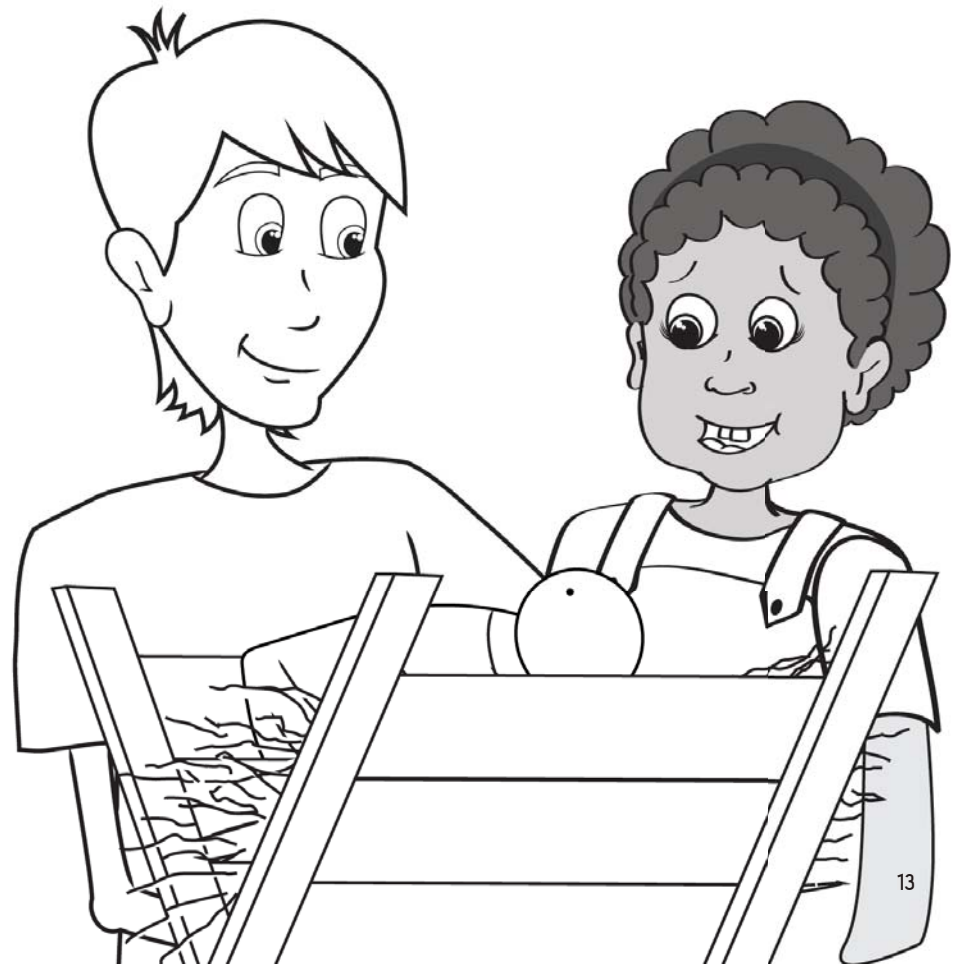
Teach us to see you in the people we meet, in the nature we enjoy, in the gifts you provide. Grant us patience as we watch for signs of your hope in our lives. Help us share your light in the world. Amen.

Candle snuffer: *Lift the candle snuffer high so the smoke can rise. Say:* This smoke reminds us of the hidden presence of God's Spirit spreading hope all over our world, even when we can't see it. Amen.

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. Create an Advent Calendar style poster that has 6 flaps on it which cover the weekly 8 ½" x 11" printouts from www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2395. These would best be stapled onto a piece of poster board or thin paneling. The flaps could be decorated with 'mysterious fabrics' and glitter. Add the weekly themes as the season progresses. During week one, add the first theme, open and colour the Advent 1 picture of arms stretching out in hope. If you like, look at the other pictures and guess what the theme will be.
2. Start setting up a Christmas crèche. Begin with the figures of those who were waiting for the Messiah.

4. Continue your family Advent journal by reflecting on signs of God's beauty in the scripture readings or in your lives. Write or draw pictures about these signs of beauty.
5. Go for a walk or ride into the countryside and think about how the land and animals belong to God and help us know God. Rewrite Psalm 148 to include local sights that glorify God.
6. Send notes of thanks to people in your church family who have worked hard to help you discover and celebrate God's mystery during Advent.
7. Plan a party and invite people from your neighbourhood to attend. Playing a game full of mystery could help you talk about God's good mystery.
8. See Christmas home worship on page 16 for additional suggestions.



Your Beauty is Revealed

Christmas 1 – Dec. 28, 2014 – Jan 3, 2015

Call to Worship:

Speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Beautiful God, we rejoice to see your beauty revealed in baby Jesus. Fill our hearts and help us worship with joy.

Candle lighter: *Light and review the meaning of the four Advent candles. Then say: As we light this fifth candle and the Christ candle, we celebrate Jesus, God's beautiful son.*

Listening to God's Word:

Reflect on signs of God's beauty with these daily texts: Luke 2: 21-24, 25-32, 33-40; Isaiah 61:10-11, 62:1-3; Psalm 148: 1-6, 7-14.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- I wonder what celebrating Jesus, like Simeon and Anna did, is like.
- I wonder what was most surprising about the birth of Jesus.
- I wonder how God's coming to us in Jesus frees us to bless others.

Sing or Play: HWB 318 *Joy to the world*, HWB 212 *O come, all ye faithful* and other favourites.

Closing Prayer: *Use echo form or ask one person to prepare to read this prayer.*

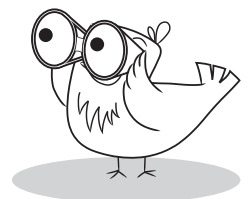
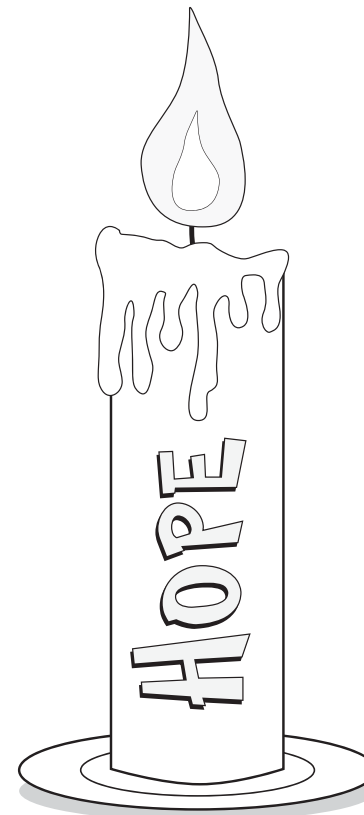
God, we praise you for coming among us. We thank you for the birth of beautiful Jesus, who helps us see you. Help us share this good news. Amen.

Candle snuffer: *Lift the candle snuffer high so the smoke can rise. Say: This smoke reminds us of God's beauty spreading out over our homes, churches, and the world. Amen.*

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. During week five, decorate and add the fifth theme, "Your Beauty is Revealed," to flap #5, open and colour the Christmas 1 picture of a hand of blessing showing God's beauty.
2. Listen to or make music that helps you praise God for Jesus.
3. Talk about where you can find God's beauty in your neighbourhood. Then write about it and share this with your neighbours.

3. Begin your family Advent journal by reflecting on signs of hope you notice in the week's scripture readings or in your lives. Write or draw pictures about these signs of hope.
4. Hide signs of God's hopeful activity for each other. Look for them and bring them to the supper table to share with others. (As a young boy, St. Nicholas tried to help people secretly as a sign of his love for Jesus.)
5. Plant crocus bulbs near the walls of a see-through pot that is at least 20 cm deep. Wrap the pot so the bulbs remain in darkness, but so that you can peek to see that things are happening even while the bulb is hidden in the soil. Look forward to their cheerful greeting next February.
6. Use modeling or potter's clay to express what people in your family discover as signs of God's hopeful activity.
7. Choose a way of responding to God's hopeful activity by picking a family service or gift project. For family friendly projects that are introduced to you by Chris and Gloria, see: www.mennonitechurch.ca/give/index.php



Please Reveal Your Peace

Second Advent – Dec. 7-13, 2014

Call to Worship:

Speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Leader: Come, let us worship God who is here and desires our worship. *[pause]* God of peace, work in our hearts, so that we, your children, would know your peace.

Candle lighter: *Light and review the meaning of the first candle. Then say:* We light this second Advent candle to remind us that peace grows when we listen for God's voice.

Listening to God's Word: God's coming makes peace possible in our lives. Reflect on it through these daily texts: Isaiah 40:1-5, 6-11; Psalm 85:8-13; Luke 1:5-14, 57-66; Mark 1:1-8; 2 Peter 3: 8-15.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- I wonder how the images in today's reading show God's desire for peace.
- I wonder which words invite me to make peace today.
- I wonder how we can join in with God's way of peace today.

Sing or play: STJ 59 *Come and fill our hearts* or STJ 31 *He came down*

Closing Prayer:

God of Peace, may your face shine on us, give us peace, and help us share the peace and love we have received. Amen.

Candle snuffer: *Lift the candle snuffer high so the smoke can rise. Say:* This smoke reminds us of God's peace spreading all over our world, even when we can't see it. Amen.

3. If you have been practicing Mary's song of praise, help each other recite it from memory this week, or, sing it from SJ 13.
4. Continue your family Advent journal by reflecting on signs of love you notice in the week's scripture readings or in your lives. Write or draw pictures about these signs of love.
5. Draw a maze for the path to Bethlehem. Get family members to pretend their fingers are the donkey and challenge them to help the donkey get Mary to Bethlehem. Will they meet poor shepherds on the way?
6. Memorize the Luke 2 passage as a family by hiding written portions of the text under the dinner plates on your table. Look under your plates before you put food into them and read them in correct order each day.
7. Read some Christmas story picture books. Then act them out in your home with simple props and costumes. One new option is *Birth of the Chosen One: Retold* by Terry M. Wildman; Ill: Ramone Romero (Great Thunder Publishing, 2013). www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2397 God dwells in our troubles



Please Reveal your Love

Fourth Advent – Dec. 21-27, 2014

Call to Worship:

Speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Loving God, we are so glad that you want to be at home with us and that your love helps people not be lonely.

Candle lighter: *Light and review the meaning of the first three candles. Then say: We light this fourth Advent candle to remember that God loves and lives with the poor.*

Listening to God's Word:

Reflect on God's loving the lonely and changing the world's order with these daily texts: 2 Samuel 7:8-16; Psalm 89:1-4, and 19-24; Romans 16:25-27; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; 47-55; (Christmas Eve) Luke 2:1-20.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- I wonder how David, Mary, and Joseph experienced God's changes in their lives.
- I wonder how God changes people to prepare them for special tasks.
- I wonder for what tasks God is preparing our family.

Sing or play:

SJ 109 *There is more love somewhere* and SS10 *Come! Walk in the light*. Add other favourites from HWB 189-215 this week.

Closing Prayer: God, we thank you for your great big love that comes to be at home with us, even if we are poor. Help us to be at home with and share your great big love as well. Amen.

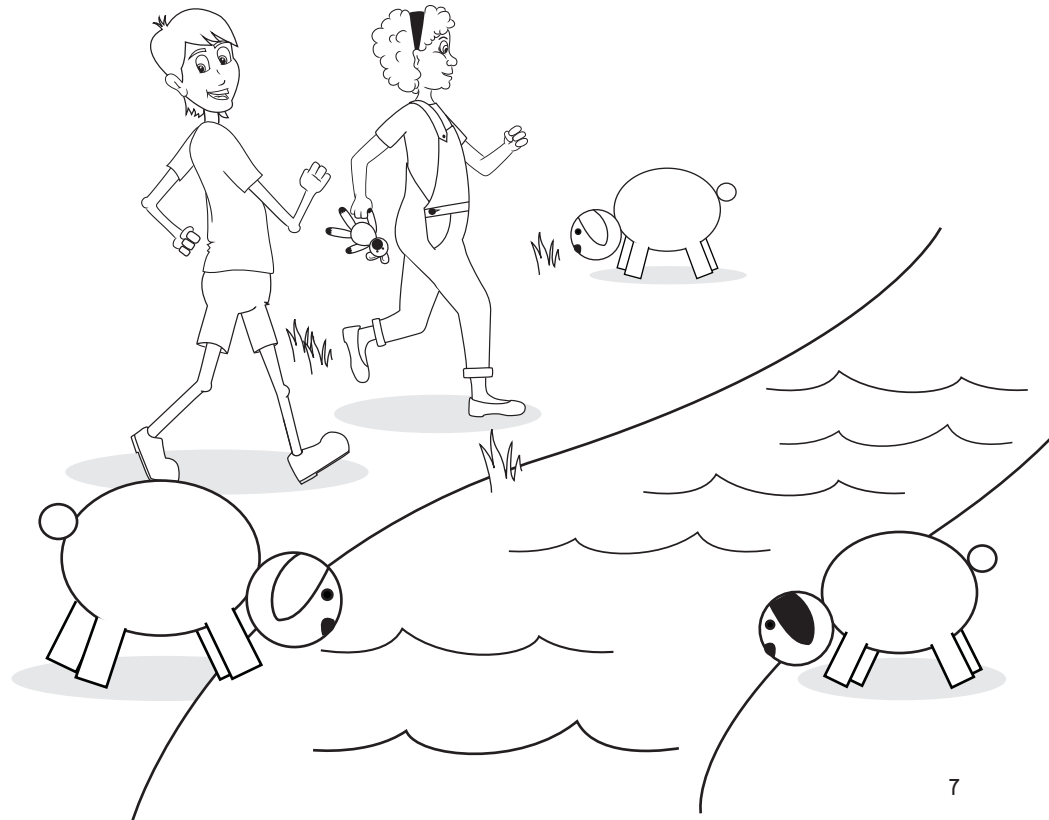
Candle snuffer: *Lift the candle snuffer high so the smoke can rise. Say: This smoke reminds us of the great big love of God spreading over all our homes and the world. Amen.*

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. During week four, add the fourth theme, "Please Reveal Your Love," to flap #4, open and colour the Advent 4 picture of a loving hug by a child and an adult. Keep looking and guessing at the themes for the other pictures.
2. Add a special Jesus stocking to your other Christmas decorations. Invite guests and family members to donate money to this stocking. Add these proceeds to your Advent project and collect it as your gift for Jesus.

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. During week two, add the second theme, "Please Reveal Your Peace" to flap #2, open and colour the Advent 2 picture of arms holding each other in peace. Keep looking and guessing at the themes for the other pictures.
2. Add to your Christmas crèche. Add 'grassy' hills and a 'stream' for the shepherds and think of how they offered their sheep a peaceful place to live.
3. Continue your family Advent journal by reflecting on signs of peace you notice in the week's scripture readings or in your lives. Write or draw pictures about these signs of peace.
4. Enjoy a picture book, such as *Walk in Peace*, by Ingrid Hess, (Herald Press, 2009) that celebrates the peace of God in our daily lives. www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2396
5. Write and draw your own "Walk in Peace" story and send it to someone you and God love as a way of sharing God's peace.
6. Make a list of peaceful changes we can make in how we treat others. Remember your Advent giving project that can help create peace for other children of God (<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/give/index.php> or 1-866-888-6785).



Please Reveal your Joy

Third Advent – Dec. 14-20, 2014

Call to Worship:

Speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Redeeming God, our hearts fill with joy as we think about you. We are so glad you can turn tears of sorrow into joy.

Candle lighter: *Light and review the meaning of the first two candles. Then say:* We light this third Advent candle to remember the way God's presence brings joy into our world.

Listening to God's Word:

Reflect on how God's joy is revealed in these daily texts: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; Luke 1:46-55; 57-66; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-23; John 1:6-8, 19-28.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- What kinds of changes do you think God wants in our world?
- How does our God of peace help us find and bring joy in our neighbourhoods?
- Imagine how your home, your congregation, and the world would change if everyone lived God's way.

Sing or play: SJ 13 *My soul is filled with joy* or SS10 *Come! Walk in the light*

Closing Prayer: *Use echo form or ask one person to prepare to read this prayer.*

God of joy, we offer you the sadness in our family, our church, and the world. We look to you to bring joy back to all our hearts. Shine on us and help us be faithful so that your joy can grow in us, around us, and through us. Amen.

Candle snuffer: *Lift the candle snuffer high so the smoke can rise. Say:* This smoke reminds us of the Spirit of God going out to change sorrow to joy in our homes and the world. Amen.

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. During week three, add the third theme, "Please Reveal Your Joy" to flap #3, open and colour the Advent 3 picture of hands expressing joy with castanets. Add your own signs of joy. Keep looking and guessing at the themes for the other pictures.
2. Add to your Christmas crèche by making sure everything in the stable is fixed and ready for the coming visitors.

3. Celebrate the joy of looking forward to Jesus' birth by memorizing Mary's song of praise from Luke 1:46-55.
4. Continue your family Advent journal by reflecting on signs of joy you notice in the week's scripture readings or in your lives. Write or draw pictures about these signs of joy.
5. Fix an unused toy and give it to the local thrift store or charity—or offer a favourite toy to someone whom you know would appreciate it.
6. Write and send a letter to your political representative that encourages him/her to help share God's joy and make things right.
7. Reflect on and give thanks for things in your family and congregation where choosing God's way has brought joy.

