

ADVENT AT HOME, 2007

WAKE UP TO GOD'S DREAM!

1ST ADVENT 2007- EPIPHANY, 2008
LECTIONARY CYCLE A



Mennonite
Church
Canada

Wake up to God's Dream!

1st Advent 2007– Epiphany, 2008
Lectionary Cycle A

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HWB = Hymnal: A worship book.
STJ = Sing the Journey
STS = Sing the Story

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INTRODUCTION:

Advent means “coming” or “arrival.” It is in this spirit of expectancy that we seek to connect families in our congregations with God’s dream, celebrating the Kingdom which is already among us and yet to come more fully.

During the season of Advent, God’s Christian children approach Christmas with the unique focus of responding to the call to live in the middle of God’s dream.

This year, we are encouraged to *“Get ready! Take heart! Rejoice! Be restored! Praise the Lord! Arise and Shine!”* These themes encourage us to act confidently because we know that the light of God is breaking forth in the darkness and is becoming the Light of the World.

The prayers and activities in this booklet are adapted from the worship resources developed by the Advent 2007 writing team from the Southwestern District of Mennonite Church USA for *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.

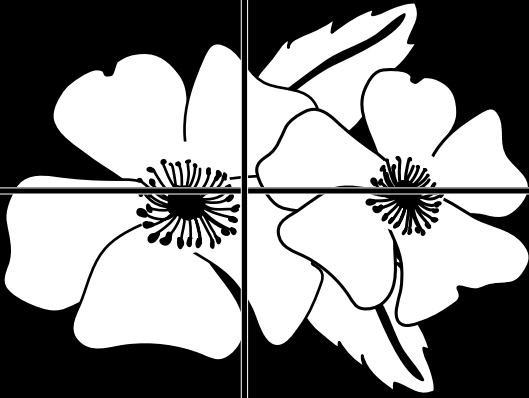
The **pondering questions** foster a contemplative attitude of listening to the nudging of the Holy Spirit. Feel free to share or ponder these thoughts in your heart as Mary did.

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. A Theme Poster: Title the poster “Waking up to God’s Dream.” Begin your poster by drawing or pasting pictures of mountains against a dark night sky. Add shaded strips of purple and pink to the sky as the season brings us closer to the dawning of God’s kingdom. Purple, pink and the white of the Christ candle reflect the move from repentant preparation to celebration.
2. Advent Lights and Wreath: The Midwestern imagery offered by this year’s resource writing team suggests a wreath of juniper branches with tin can luminaries around a Christ Candle. Create luminaries with small tin cans (i.e. small tomato paste cans). Hammer holes into them with a nail. (Hold the tin can over a slightly narrower dowel or pipe.) The cans can be nailed onto the Juniper branch or other wreath base to provide a stable base for tea light candles.
3. A Simple Crèche: If you don’t have one, create a simple A-frame with rough lumber or bark and add appropriate toy or play dough figures to the scene throughout the season.
4. A Family Advent Journal: The activities section will have a reflective question for each week’s theme. If you haven’t kept a journal before, consider starting one for this season.
5. Mennonite Hymnals such as *Hymnal Worship Book (HWB)*, *Sing the Journey (STJ)*, and *Sing the Story(STS)*, and the Year 1 CD from *Gather 'Round: Hearing and sharing God’s good news*.
6. A Bible, and this booklet. (NRSV has a lovely new children’s Bible – see www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/365.)





WAKE UP TO GOD'S DREAM!

Week One (Dec. 2–8)

Call to Worship:

Leader can speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Leader: Get ready! God is coming to teach us and show us what needs to change.

God, our Rock, we trust your mercy and that you will show us your saving dream. We want your dream to be ours. Amen.

Candle lighter: (*light the candle, then say...*) This first Advent candle reminds us to get ready for the new things God is dreaming and doing.

Listening to God's Word: Reflect on God's dream through these texts this week: Isaiah 2: 1-5, Psalm 122: 1–5, 6–9, Romans 13: 11–14, Matthew 24: 36–44, Luke 1: 26–38, 39–45.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- How do we see God acting in today's reading?
- I wonder how God's dream helps us live God's way with confidence.
- I wonder what new things God is doing in my life.

Sing or play: HWB 172 *O come, O come, Immanuel* or *Living in the Middle of God's Creation (Gather 'Round CD, year one, track 4)*

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

God of wisdom, we want to live in your good and true dream. Dreaming with you makes us strong. Help us to trust and follow your way and keep us safe in your love.

Candle snuffer: May God's dream shine in and through us, even as we blow out this candle. Amen.

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. Create the mountains, dark sky and the title for your poster. You will add more signs of the light of God's dream to it during the other weeks.
2. Bring the light of God's dream into someone else's life today by helping them imagine a better way of solving a problem.
3. Imagine what God's creation care plan is for your community this Advent. How can your celebrations fit in with that plan?
4. Start setting up a Christmas crèche. Add the figures of those who were waiting for the Messiah.
5. Start out on God's Advent path by looking for evidence of God's activities in your home and neighbourhood. Record these signs of God's presence in your Family Advent journal.
6. When you wake up, ask yourself if you had a dream. Think about it and then tell your family about your dream when you gather around the advent wreath.
7. Find a *KidsPak* project that captures your imagination and helps you join God's dream and make a difference for families and congregations in other countries this Advent. Invite other families to join you. Choose from a list of child friendly projects at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/72.





TAKE HEART! GOD HELPS US GROW

Week Two (Dec. 9–15)

Call to Worship: *Leader can speak this in phrases which are echoed or acted out by the other family members.*

Leader: Take heart! Look around on God's holy mountain! Kick off your shoes and root your feet in its good mountain soil. Become like a green sprout growing out of a dead tree stump. God wants us to grow toward God's dream. We want to grow and pray for God's help.

Candle lighter: *(light the candles, then say)* The second candle reminds us that God is busy transforming and healing the world.

Listening to God's Word:

Reflect on God's harmony through these daily texts: Isaiah 11: 1–10; Psalm 72: 1–7, 18–19; Romans 15: 4–13; Matthew 1: 18–25; Luke 1: 57–66; 67–80; Matthew 3: 1–12.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- I wonder what it looks like when God helps people grow and bear God's fruit.
- I wonder when all enemies will learn to co-operate and become friends.
- How is God's dream bringing new life and producing new fruit in your home and congregation this Advent?

Sing or play: HWB 187 *Let the heavens be glad* and STJ 42 *Listen, God is calling.*

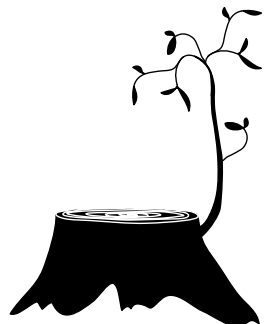
Prayer: *(Use echo form or ask one person to prepare to read this prayer.)*

Lord of new growth, you call us to turn around and start over with you. That means we have to stop doing harmful things. We can only do this with your help. Please help us by filling us with your joy and peace and give us courage to start over. Amen.

Candle snuffer: May God's joy and peace keep growing in and through us, even as we blow out this candle. Amen.

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. On your poster, add a broad strip of purple paper or paint to the horizon and some small green plants to the lower mountain slopes.
2. Add small toy animals and bushes to your crèche landscape. Put animals together who are natural enemies to show the new ways that God will make possible one day.
3. Measure to see how tall you are. Mark these heights in a place you can check in summer to see how your bodies are growing.
4. In your Advent journal, make a list of good attitudes and actions that are growing in your family. Practice encouraging each other when you notice each other practicing these good ways.
5. Write a letter or send an e-mail to your political representative that expresses your commitment for growing harmony and peace in our world.
6. Pray daily for a person with whom friendship is hard to grow. Ask God to help you have the right attitude.
7. Grow bean or alfalfa sprouts between moist paper towels to watch the way God makes things grow and to enjoy some fresh local vegetables.
8. Get together with your neighbours, or another family from your church, to help joy and love grow in a nearby seniors' home or food bank.





Week Three (Dec. 16–22)

Call to Worship:

Leader can speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Leader: Wisdom will flow from God's presence, and justice will follow her voice. Our faithful God decides for the poor and loves what is fair. We want to be fair like God is and hope God's fairness will blossom in our home.

Candle lighter: (*light the candles, then say*) The third candle reminds us that God's dream of peace and fairness is getting closer.

Listening to God's Word:

Reflect on God's healing power with these daily texts: Isaiah 35: 1–7, 8–10, Psalm 146: 5–10, Luke 1: 39–56, James 5: 7–10, Matthew 11: 2–6, 7–11.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- I wonder how you have experienced and shared God's fairness and peace.
- I wonder what you think and feel about God's dream of peace and fairness.
- I wonder what life would be like if everyone lived by God's values of peace and fairness.

Sing or play:

HWB 400 *Santo, santo, santo*, STJ 49 *Rain Down*, or HWB 184 *Hark! The glad sound!*

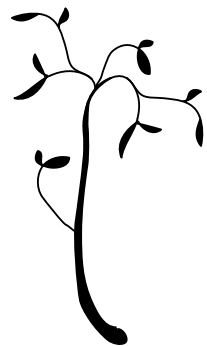
Prayer: (*Use echo form or ask one person to prepare to read this prayer.*)

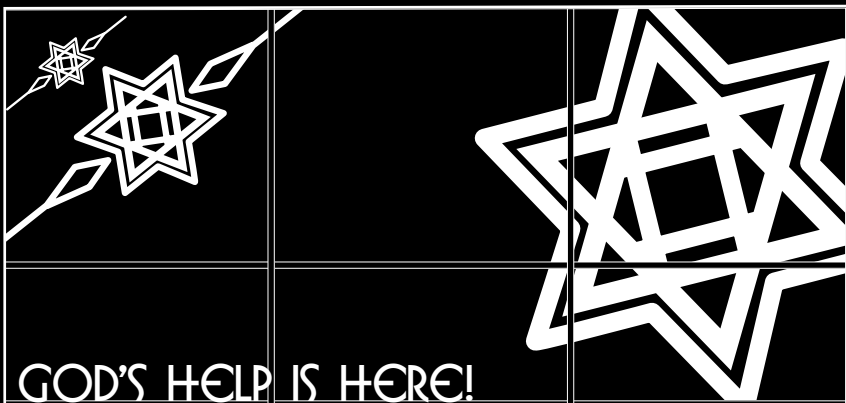
God of peace and fairness, forgive us for times when we are not fair. Give us the energy, understanding and love to work for a fair and peaceful world. We trust you to teach us what we need to learn and to give us strength, healing and hope for the journey.

Candle snuffer: May God's fair love work in and through us as God's day draws near, even as we blow out this candle. Amen.

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. Add a slightly thinner strip of lighter purple, or magenta, paper or paint to the horizon line of your poster. In the foreground add small pictures or symbols of fair sharing, such as rich and poor people gathered around a campfire meal, telling stories.
2. Reflect on and give thanks for the ways God's loving fairness is active in your family and congregation.
3. Draw a picture about the fairness in one of our Bible texts and give it to a sick or lonely person.
4. Practice James' advice about being patient by waiting patiently for Christmas.
5. Add figures to your crèche that represent people or animals who are not being treated fairly and pray for them.
6. As you bake Christmas goodies and prepare gifts, share some of these with people who have less than your family.





Week Four (Dec. 23–29)

Call to Worship:

Leader can speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Leader: Come! Worship Immanuel! God-with-us! Come, Immanuel, and live in us so that hope blooms within our hearts.

Candle lighter: (*light the candles, then say*) The fourth candle reminds us of a night long ago when the darkness was broken by the birth of Immanuel, the one who wakes us up to God's dream.

Listening to God's Word:

Reflect on God's restoring power with these daily texts: Isaiah 7: 10–16, Psalm 80: 1–7, 14–19, Romans 1: 1–7, Matthew 1: 18–25 (Christmas Eve), Luke 2: 1–7 (Christmas Day), Luke 2: 8–20.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- I wonder how Mary and Joseph were helped by these Hebrew Scriptures as Jesus' birth drew near.
- I wonder how God wants to help us share God's dream through these Scriptures.
- I wonder how Mary and Joseph experienced God's help when the shepherds came to visit.

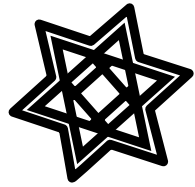
Sing or play:

HWB 201 *Hark! the herald angels sing*, STJ 97 *The Lord is my light*, and other favourites from HWB (189 – 214) this week.

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

Helping God, restore to us the light of your presence and we shall be saved. We thank you for coming to be God-with-us, for coming to make us whole.

Candle snuffer: May Jesus help us know God is with us always, even as we blow out this candle. Amen



ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

During Christmas Week:

1. Add a bright pink strip of paper or paint to the sky horizon on your poster, to show that the Light of the World is rising.
2. Add a special Jesus stocking to your other Christmas decorations. Invite guests and family members to donate money to this stocking. Then send the proceeds to the *KidsPak* project your family chose in week one as a place Jesus would want his “gift” to go.
3. Bring Mary and Joseph to the stable.
4. Recall and share stories of how God’s purposes are being restored in your congregation during this last year.
5. Thank an older person in your life for the ways they have made you aware of God’s dreams for your life.
6. Give the gifts of time, friendship and a hug to someone who does not have family around. Read and enjoy some Christmas story picture books. Variations of the French legend of the shoemaker’s Christmas dream connect well with this year’s theme. Among these are: *Papa Panov’s Special Day*, retold by Mig Holder, ill. Nathalie Vilain, or (the newer version) ill. by Julie Downing, *The Shoemaker’s Dream*, retold by Mildred Schell, ill. Masahiro Kasuya (www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/368), and Baboushka Papa Panov by [Arthur Scholey](#).

Christmas home worship:

- As you light the Christ candle in your worship centre for the first time, light a candle on a birthday cake for Jesus, too. Sing “Happy Birthday” to Jesus, or another appropriate Christmas song.
- Gently place the baby Jesus into the crèche, then add the angels and bring the shepherds into the stable.
- Pick an appropriate carol to sing as you carry out each of these actions. Consider learning and singing a newer song such as STS 29 *Brightest and Best*.
- 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.
- Repeat or create your own special rituals and traditions to mark the importance of “Emmanuel - God with us”.
- On Christmas Day, you may want to plan a God’s dream theme party and invite people from your neighbourhood to attend. Give each person a balloon and invite him or her to imagine what God’s dream is like while they blow up the balloon. Gather around your worship center, light all candles from the Christ candle, and talk about the different aspects of God’s dream that you have been awakened to during Advent. Then have a “dreamy” or shepherd style snack together. (My mother’s recipe for Dream Cake is on the back page.)

PRaise THE LORD! GOD IS ACTIVE AMONG US.



Week Five (Dec 30/07–Jan 5/08)

Call to Worship:

Leader can speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Leader: Praise the Lord! God brings down the mighty and lifts up the humble. Let all creation, earth and heaven, praise the name of the Lord.

Like Joseph, who heard God in a dream, we want to pay close attention to what God says to us today.

Candle lighter: (*light the candles, including the Christ candle, then say*) The fifth candle reminds us that God often speaks in ways that are mysterious and hidden.

Listening to God's Word:

Reflect on God's saving power with these daily texts: Isaiah 63: 7–9, 15–19, Isaiah 64: 1–5a, Psalm 148, Hebrews 2: 10–13, 14-18, Matthew 2: 13–23.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- I wonder what makes people praise or resist God's saving power.
- I wonder how God felt about trusting humans to care for Jesus.
- I wonder how God's dream keeps growing, even when scary and tragic things happen.

Sing or Play:

HWB 202 *The virgin Mary had a baby boy*, HWB 55 *Cantemos al Señor*, STJ 24 *Creation is a song* and other favorites.

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

God of hope, who never gives up, we need your strength and power. Help us resist what is evil and stick to the path of hope and peace.

Candle snuffer: May God's saving activity shine in and through us even as we blow out this candle. Amen.

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. On your poster, paint or paste paths from the East to Bethlehem for the Wisemen and to Egypt from Bethlehem for Mary and Joseph to follow.
2. Listen to Bryan Moyer Suderman's new song, "Christ was born in Bethlehem," to help you think about Jesus as a refugee. Available on MC Canada's website at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/357
3. Read about or hear a live story from refugees who have been saved from violence. The picture book for 4-8 year-olds, *Going Home*, by Eve Bunting and David Diaz (1998), tells the story of economic refugees going home to Mexico for Christmas and provides a gentle introduction to this theme.
4. Buy or make a blanket for Mennonite Central Committee to send to refugees or send some of your clothing to a homeless shelter.
5. Go for a walk or ride into the countryside and think about how the land, the plant and animal life show signs of God's life giving action.
6. Rewrite Psalm 148 so it refers to the land, plants and animals where you live.
7. Send notes of thanks to people in your church family who have worked hard to share the good and saving news of Jesus during Advent.





ARISE! SHINE! GOD'S
MYSTERY IS HERE!

Week Six (Jan. 6–12/08)

Call to Worship:

Leader can speak this in phrases which are echoed by the other family members.

Leader: Lift your eyes! See the shining! The glory of the Lord has risen upon us. We worship and adore our Saviour, Christ the Lord.

Candle lighter: (*light the candles, then say*) This sixth candle reminds us that God's glory has risen upon us. God's light is growing among us through Jesus.

Listening to God's Word:

Read and reflect on the mystery of God's glory through these daily texts: Matthew 2: 1–12, Isaiah 60: 1–6, Psalm 72: 1–7, 8–14, 15–20, Ephesians 3: 1–6, 7–13.

Pondering thoughts to choose from:

- I wonder how God's glory shone in the baby Jesus.
- I wonder how God's glory shines through us and our acts of kindness?
- I wonder about the mysterious ways God's glory might be shown to us today?

Sing or play:

HWB 222 *How brightly beams the morning star*, HWB 207 *Niño lindo (Child so lovely)* or STS 29 *Brightest and Best*

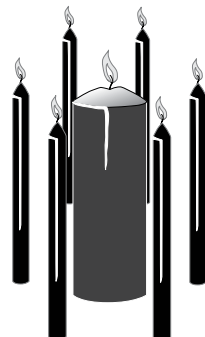
Prayer: (*Use echo form or ask one person to prepare to read this prayer.*)

God of Glory, along with the wise of every age, we worship and adore you. But we sometimes lose our way. Help us. Forgive us. Help us find our way and be usable for you. We want to walk side by side with Jesus to do the work of the church and share in God's dream.

Candle snuffer: May God's glory shine in and through us as God's day draws near, even as we blow out and put away these candles. Amen.

ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. Have a Three Kings Party. Bake another Dream Cake, invite friends and neighbours, dress up with crowns and robes, and read Tomie de Paola's *The Story of the Three Wise Kings* (Putnam, New York, 1983) (www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/369). Refill your luminary candle holders with new candles and enjoy giving them away as gifts to your guests.
2. Make a plan with the members of your household to find new ways of listening to God and worshipping together, now that the Christmas season has ended.
3. Wrap a gift brightly and give it to a foreign student or a lonely neighbour.
4. Think of ways your family can share God's glorious mystery and dream in our world. If you have been gathering money for a *KidsPak* project, as recommended in week one, this would be a great time to bless and send in your donation.
5. Brighten the life of the birds who have stayed around for winter by putting up or refilling a birdfeeder with suet and seeds.
6. Play your favourite Christmas music while you clean up and put away the objects that have helped you celebrate Christmas.
7. Reflect on highlights of this year's advent to epiphany worship time and record them in your family worship journal.



DREAM CAKE

Base:

1½ c. flour
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking powder
½ c. shortening
1 c. brown sugar
1 egg and 2 egg yolks, beaten
½ tsp. vanilla

Topping:

2 egg whites beaten stiffly
1 cup brown sugar

Method:

Cream shortening and brown sugar. Add eggs. Mix dry ingredients and blend to form a soft dough. Spread dough on an ungreased 10" x 15" cookie sheet. Cover with brown sugar meringue. Sprinkle topping with walnuts, pecans or chocolate chips, as desired.

Bake at 325 for about 30 minutes and let cool in pan.





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