



December 17

## Advent Wreath

The third Sunday of Advent is known as *Gaudete* Sunday--a word which means "rejoice" in Latin. This Sunday marks a turn from the solemn preparation and penitence of Advent toward joy as we anticipate the coming King. This lighter mood during this week of Advent is marked visibly by the lighter rose candle.

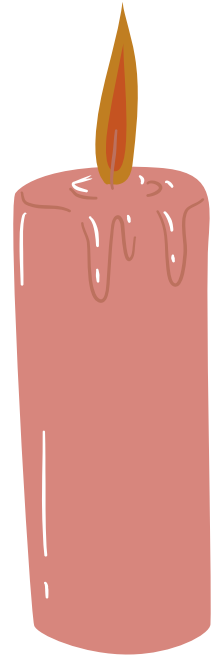
### Week Three: Joy

**Candle:** Two purple and one pink

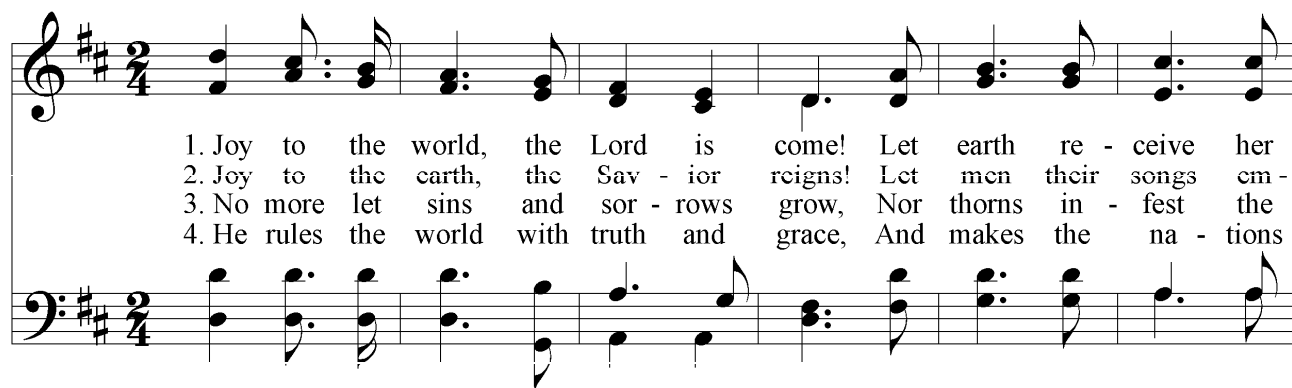
**Scripture:** Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

**Prayer:** God of joy, it is in your love that we find lasting joy. Keep us from seeking happiness in things that will not last. Teach us instead to find joy in the gift of your Son, who came into this world with nothing, yet gave us everything. May his joy fill our hearts and overflow to all we meet this Advent season. *Amen.*

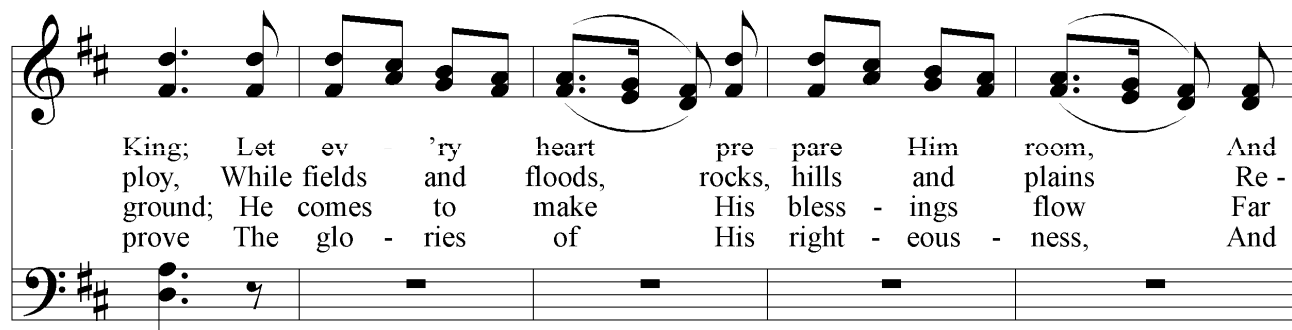
**Hymn:** Joy to the World



# Joy To The World



1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive her  
 2. Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let men their songs em -  
 3. No more let sins and sor - rows grow, Nor thorns in - fest the  
 4. He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the na - tions



King; Let ev - 'ry heart pre pare Him room, And  
 ploy, While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains Re -  
 ground; He comes to make His bless - ings flow Far  
 prove The glo - ries of His right - eous - ness, And



heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na - ture sing,  
 peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat the sound - ing joy,  
 as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found,  
 won - ders of His love, And won - ders of His love,

(1. And heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n



And heav'n, and heav'n, and na - ture sing.  
 Re - peat, re - peat, the sound - ing joy.  
 Far as, far as, the curse is found.  
 And won - ders, won - ders, of His love.

and na - ture sing,)



December 18

## Dance for Joy

The third Sunday of Advent is known as *Gaudete* Sunday--a word which means "rejoice" in Latin. This Sunday marks a turn from the solemn preparation and penitence of Advent toward joy as we anticipate the coming King. This lighter mood during this week of Advent is marked visibly by the lighter rose candle. What greater or more practical way to bring joy than with a quick dance party around the Christmas tree? The song suggestions below are admittedly secular, but sure to get everyone dancing!

### Song Suggestions

Rocking Around the Christmas Tree

All I Want for Christmas Is You





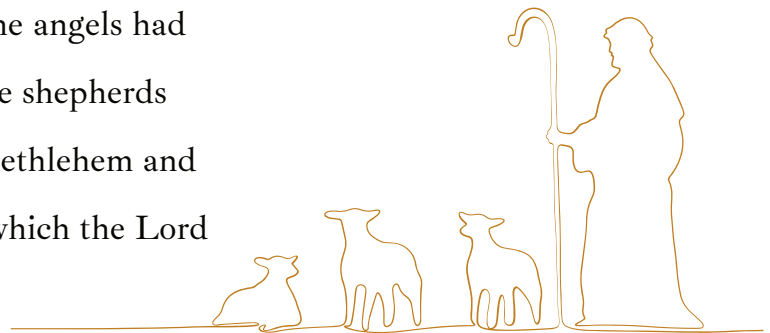
December 19

## Nativity: The Shepherds & Angels

This week, we add the shepherds and angels to the nativity scene and reflect on what it might have been like to be visited by a host of angels announcing the birth of Christ. Would you be frightened? Excited? Anxious? Most importantly, would you be ready?

### Scripture

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” - Luke 2:8-15



## Reflection

I wonder who the shepherds were?

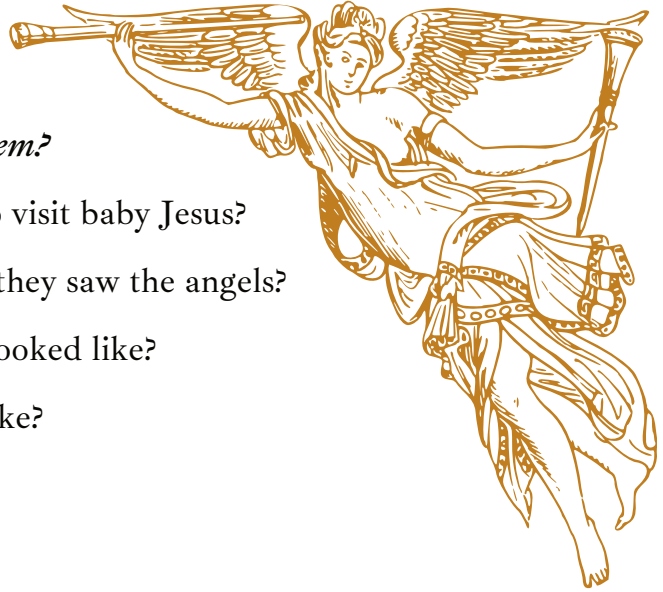
I wonder why the angels appeared to *them*?

I wonder why God wanted shepherds to visit baby Jesus?

I wonder what the shepherds felt when they saw the angels?

I wonder what the "glory of the Lord" looked like?

I wonder what "peace on earth" looks like?



## Hymn

Angels We Have Heard on High

## Food Suggestions

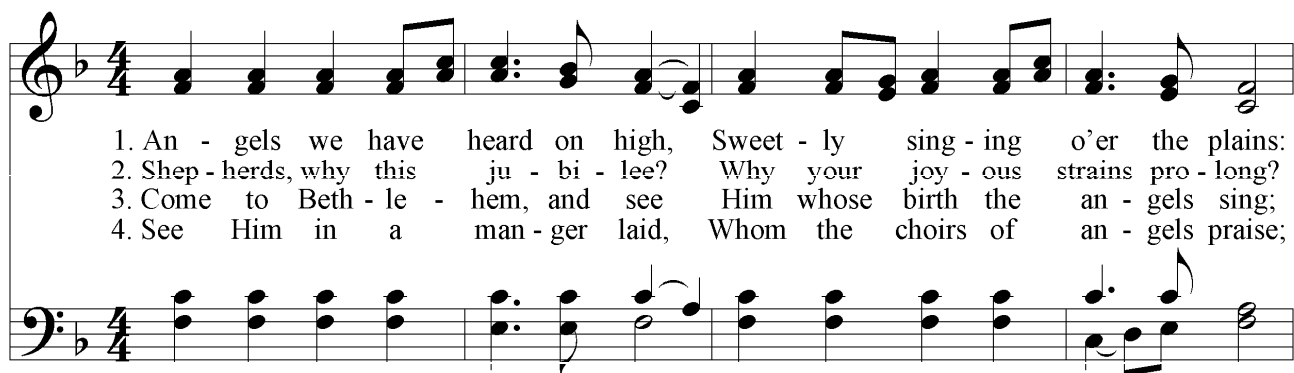
In keeping with the Shepherd theme, serve Shepherd's Pie for dinner, or lay out a blanket in front of the Christmas tree and eat a "Shepherd's meal" of cheeses, pita, meats, fruits, nuts and olives. Enjoy Angel Food Cake for dessert.

## Recommended Reading

*The Crippled Lamb* by Max Lucado

*The Little Shepherd's Christmas* by Carol Heyer

# Angels We Have Heard On High

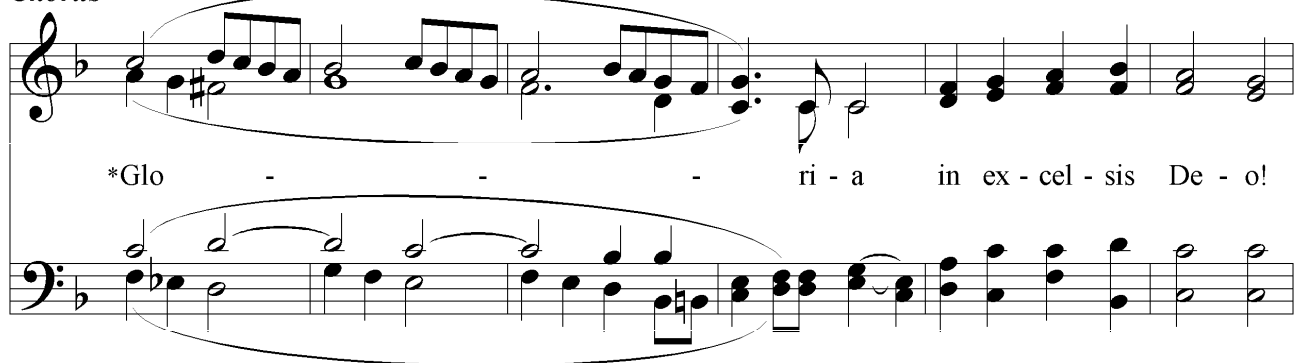


1. An - gels we have heard on high, Sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains:  
2. Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long?  
3. Come to Beth - le - hem, and see Him whose birth the an - gels sing;  
4. See Him in a man - ger laid, Whom the choirs of an - gels praise;



And the moun - tains in re - ply, Ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.  
What the glad some tid - ings be Which in spire your heav'n ly song?  
Come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ the Lord, the new - born King.  
Ma - ry, Jo - seph, lend your aid, While our hearts in love we raise?

## Chorus



\*Glo - - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o!



Glo - - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o!



## December 20

# Blessing Bags

Blessing bags are disposable bags filled with non-perishable food and sanitary items for the homeless. They are a simple, yet meaningful way to serve Jesus in “the least of these” this Advent, bringing Joy to the world. Keep them in your car and give one away as you come across someone in need. Alternatively, take them to a local food pantry.

### Content Suggestions

Be sure to include a handmade Christmas card—a great project for the kids. Other suggestions are a water bottle, granola bar, band aids, chapstick, gloves, socks, toothbrush and toothpaste, baby wipes, hard candy, \$5 gift cards, single bus passes

### Reflection

Just as Advent is about the first coming of Jesus, it is also about his coming again. Read Matthew 25:31-40 as a family and discuss why serving the poor is an “Advent activity”, and how it prepares the world for Jesus’ return.

### Prayer

Almighty and most merciful God, bless these bags and those who will receive them, for you know each one by name. Help us always to remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the refugee and the overlooked, and all who have none to care for them. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*





December 21

## Christmas Caroling

It's difficult to think of a more joyous Advent activity than caroling, especially at a hospital or nursing home. If caroling won't work for your family, hold a family sing-along instead featuring your favorite Christmas carols.

### Christmas Carol Suggestions

Angels We Have Heard on High

Away in a Manger

Go Tell It On the Mountain

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Joy to the World

O Come All Ye Faithful

O Holy Night

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Silent Night

The First Noel



Non-Religious:

Deck the Halls

Frosty the Snowman

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas

Jingle Bells

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

Silver Bells





December 22

## Candlelit Dinner

This evening, eat dinner by the light of your Advent wreath. Start in total darkness, reminding your family of how dark the world is without Jesus. In the darkness, recite John 1:1. You'll need to memorize it since you'll be in sitting in darkness! Light the first candle and read John 1:2-3. Light the second candle and read John 1:4. Finally, light the third candle and read John 1:5. You might choose to pass the lighter and the Bible around the table and each person gets a turn.

### Reflection

With all of the candles lit, eat dinner and discuss:

I wonder what the world was like in the beginning, before God made anything?

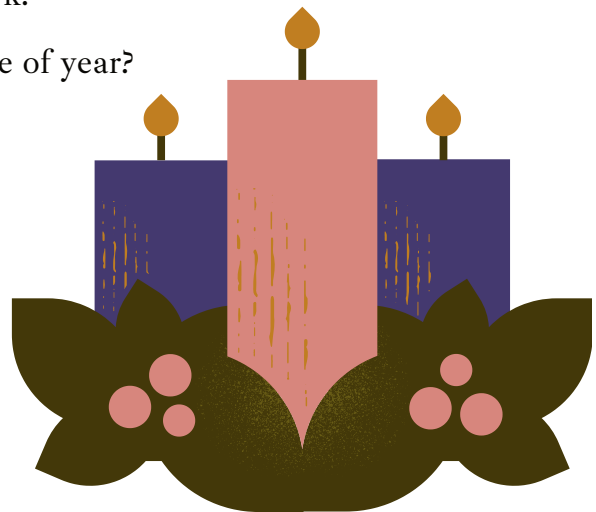
I wonder how you feel when you are in the dark?

In what ways does the world feel dark this time of year?

I wonder *who* was with God in the beginning?

I wonder how Jesus is the light *of* the world?

I wonder how we can be light *in* the world?



### Recommended Reading

*Song of the Stars* by Sally Lloyd-Jones



December 23

## Christmas Card Prayers



Around the dinner table this evening or at bedtime, gather all the Christmas cards your family has received this Advent season and place them in a pile. Read letters aloud, share special memories you have of that person, but most importantly, pray for them. If you'd like to pray for each family individually, split the cards up, and each person in your family can take a turn praying. When you finished, place all the cards in the middle and offer the following blessing:

### Prayer

Dear God, We give you thanks for the friends and family represented by these cards. Bless each one of them this Advent season and in the coming year. May they know the love and joy that comes through your Son, our Savior, this Christmas season. *Amen.*

### Recommended Reading

*The Legend of the Poinsettia* by Tomie dePaola  
*The Story of Holy and Ivy* by Rumer Godden