

CHILDREN'S TIME IDEAS

ADVENT-CHRISTMAS 2006-7



Since Advent is a time of anticipation as God's promises are revealed, a package will be unwrapped each Sunday during children's time. Each package will include two Chrismons – one representing the Old Testament scripture and the other representing the New Testament scripture.

Chrismons are Christian symbols that are traditionally gold and white and can be hung on a Jesse tree. For more information about Chrismons, see www.umcs.org/chrismons. The Jesse Tree, which takes its name from Isaiah 11:1, connects the Old Testament with the Advent season. You can purchase a green, artificial tree, approximately two feet in height, or you can use a stump that has a branch extending from one side. Set the tree within easy reach of the storyteller. The wrapped Chrismons should be placed under the tree, easily visible to the children. Chrismons can be cut out of white paper with glitter or sparkles added. Attach a string to the top of each Chrismon to hang on the Jesse Tree.

Advent 1

Wrapped Chrismons: Tree stump with branch growing from one side, Candle

Item to hand out: Small candles

Additional item: Night light to hold as you talk

Ask and allow time for responses: In what room do you have a night light?

Why do you need a night light? In our house, we keep a night light in (room) . When it's night time and it's dark, a light can help us see where to go so we don't bump our toes or trip and stumble over something. The light shows us the way to walk in the dark.

About 600 years before Jesus was born, a man in the Old Testament named Jeremiah predicted that Jesus was going to be born. He said, "I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David." What does that mean? Ancestors (great, great ... grandparents) of Jesus were David and Jesse. Jeremiah gave the people the promise of good things to come – and the good thing was Jesus! And when Jesus came to earth he told us about how we can be good. Jesus is like a light because just as a light shows us the way, Jesus shows us the way too. We don't have to stumble in the dark not knowing what is right, because Jesus is the light to show us what is good and true.

Explain the Jesse Tree: Remember how I said that one of Jesus' distant relatives was Jesse? This is a Jesse Tree. **Explain how each Sunday one package will be unwrapped and the gift will be put on the Jesse Tree.** In each package is a Chrismon. **Explain what a Chrismon is and how each Sunday there will be one representing the Old Testament and one from the New Testament.**

Unwrap the package. From the Old Testament we have a tree stump with a growing branch to remind us of Jesus' family. From the New Testament we have a candle to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world.

Prayer: God, we thank you for giving us the gift of Jesus to be our light and to teach us what is right and good. Amen.

Give each child a small candle saying: Jesus is our light.

Advent 2

Wrapped Chrismons: Diamond, Cross

Item to hand out: Pretend jewels (find glittering play jewels in a craft store)

Additional Items: Tarnished silver object (large enough to be seen easily, such as a teapot), polishing cloth

Ask and allow time for responses: If someone were coming to stay at your house, what would you do to get ready? Did you know that before Jesus was born, God picked someone to get people ready for Jesus' coming to earth? About 400 years before Jesus was born, God spoke to a man in the Old Testament named Malachi. Malachi told people that God was going to send a messenger to get people ready for Jesus' birth. In the New Testament we find out that the messenger was John. John had an important message. He told people to repent, which means to ask God to forgive our wrongdoing. In the Old Testament, Malachi also said that Jesus is coming to earth. He said that Jesus will be like a refiner or purifier of silver. (As you show the tarnished silver item, explain how precious metals tarnish and lose their shine; they fail to reflect light). Jesus came to make the world clean and fresh and bright again.

Demonstrate as you talk. Look at this tarnished silver teapot. Imagine that it is like the world, a place that becomes dull and ugly because of wrongdoing. Jesus is like the polishing cloth.

As you wipe the teapot, say: Jesus, make our world fresh and bright again. It's just like John said: repent and you are forgiven! We can be part of God's bright, sparkling world! Last week on the Jesse Tree we put on two Chrismons: a stump with a branch and a candle.

Unwrap package. Today from the Old Testament we have a Chrismon of a diamond to remind us of God's promise that Jesus is coming to make the world bright and sparkling again. From the New Testament we have a cross to remind us of Jesus' love for us.

Prayer: God, thank you for sending Jesus to make our world beautiful again. We want to love you and follow you. Amen.

Give each child a jewel saying: Jesus wants you to sparkle!

Advent 3

Wrapped Chrismons: Harp, Bell

Item to hand out: Small bells

Early prep: Find two people to beat on drums and clang cymbals – ask them to enter from the back of the church (after children's responses from first question), playing while walking up one aisle, down another and out again.

Ask and allow time for responses: What are some loud words? (shout, thunder, boom, clang, bang, clap) **After playing is over:** That was noisy, wasn't it? Where are people noisy? Why are people noisy? People were noisy in the Old Testament too – they were noisy and happy because of the promise God made to them. God said God would stand beside them. Listen to the loud words Zephaniah says in the Old Testament: Sing aloud! Shout! Rejoice! Exult! Praise! Do not fear!

We talked about a man named John last Sunday. He was noisy too! Let me tell you more about John. John looked a little strange to people. He wore clothes made from camel hair, and he wore a leather belt. John lived in the desert, and he ate bugs! Yes, the Bible says he ate locusts and wild honey. But what John looked like wasn't important – what he said was. John was getting people ready to meet Jesus. John wasn't quiet either! He told everyone of the good news of Jesus' coming. He told people that to get to heaven, they had to turn away from their sins and they had to follow God. Many people repented and were baptized by John. John did what God told him to do. John obeyed God, even if that meant living alone in the desert.

We need to obey God too – no matter what. We shouldn't be afraid to follow God. We shouldn't be afraid to tell others about God. Let's shout out and let people know about God. We should be noisy – we can't keep quiet – because we know that God is with us and has blessed us. God is a good God.

Briefly review the Chrismons on the Jesse Tree. Unwrap package. From the Old Testament we have a Chrismon of a harp to remind us to be joyful and praise God. We can be noisy too! From the New Testament we have a shell to remind us of water and being washed clean.

Prayer: God, thank you for blessing us. We praise you! We honor you! We love you! Amen!

Give each child a bell saying: Tell others about Jesus!

Advent 4

Wrapped Chrismons: Wreath or Ring, Mother and Infant

Item to hand out: Wreath or Ring

Ask and allow time for responses: Who has ever made a promise? Has anyone broken a promise? (**Give personal example, if desired.**) I'm thinking of someone who has never broken a promise. Who am I thinking of? God made a big promise to all people. Can you guess what the promise was? (**Guide answers to Jesus' birth.**)

We have talked about several people in the Old Testament who predicted Jesus' birth -- Jeremiah, Malachi and Zephaniah. Another man talked of Jesus' birth and his life 700 years before Jesus was born. His name was Micah. Listen and see if what Micah said really happened. First, Micah says the name, "Bethlehem." What does that have to do with Jesus' birth? (Birthplace) Micah talks of a ruler being born. Who would the ruler be? (Jesus) Then Micah says, "He will...feed his flock." At times we say that Jesus is the shepherd and we are his sheep, or his flock. So Micah was right again! Next Micah says, "...the whole earth will know of his greatness." Is that true? Was Jesus the greatest on

earth? Finally, Micah says, "...he will be their peace." And what does peace have to do with Jesus? (he was called "Prince of Peace; told his disciples, "Peace I leave with you." [John 14:27, etc.]. How did Micah know these things about Jesus 700 years before he was born? Micah said that Jesus would be great. Why did Jesus come to earth? (God loves us enough that he sent Jesus to earth to live among us and reveal God's love to the world. God wants us to love Jesus and to share God's love with everyone we know.)

Unwrap package. Today from the Old Testament we have a Chrismon of a wreath (or ring). A wreath (or ring) has no beginning or end. The wreath (or ring) reminds us that God's love for us has no beginning or end. It will last forever!

From the New Testament we have the mother and infant so we remember that Mary gave birth to a special baby boy. Because of the baby Jesus, we know that God loves us forever.

Prayer: God, we thank you for the gift of Jesus. Amen.

Give each child a wreath or ring saying: Jesus loves you always!

Christmas 1

Wrapped Chrismons: Candy cane, Emerald

Item to hand out: Candy canes

Additional items: baby pictures of self and of pastor, small flower seeds or corn seeds

Say: Everything that is alive starts out small. Look at the adults in the congregation. Can you imagine Pastor (name) as a tiny, crying baby? (**Show baby picture of the pastor to children.**) I was a baby too. (**Show your baby picture.**) Everyone starts out as small, helpless babies, but then we grow up. (**Show the seeds you brought and explain how plants start out small, but have great [or big] results.**)

A couple in the Old Testament, Elkanah and Hannah, had a boy named Samuel. Elkanah and Hannah brought Samuel to the tabernacle so he could serve God by helping Eli the priest. As Samuel grew up he listened to God and obeyed God's directions. When Samuel was an adult, he became judge over all of Israel. Samuel started out as a small baby, but as he grew he did great things for God.

Jesus' life is a little like Samuel's. His parents, Mary and Joseph, raised him and as he grew, he listened to God and obeyed God. Jesus started out on earth as a tiny, helpless baby, but Jesus' purpose on earth was a great one! As you grow, you also need to listen to God and obey God, so you become more like Jesus. God has great things in mind for you!

Unwrap package. Today from the Old Testament we have the Chrismon of an emerald whose green color reminds us that as we grow older, we should also grow in our knowledge of God and follow him. From the New Testament the Chrismon is the candy cane – or the shepherd's staff. The shepherd's staff reminds us that as we grow, Jesus is with us, loving us, guiding us, and caring for us.

Prayer: God, watch over us as our bodies continue to grow and as we learn to listen to Jesus and follow him. Amen.

Give each child a candy cane saying: God wants you to grow!

Epiphany

Wrapped Chrismons: Gift, Star

***Wrap the Chrismons inside three boxes**

Item to hand out: Star cookies, Star stickers, Replacement Christmas tree bulbs, etc.

Additional item: Compass

Ask and allow time for responses: Who has ever been outside at night and looked at the sky? What do you see? God put over 100 billion stars in the sky, and we see about 2000 of them at night. When you look at the stars, have you seen the Big Dipper ... the Little Dipper? Who has seen the North Star? What direction does the North Star point? (North) This star always points to the north. Years ago before people had a compass to know which direction they were to go, when they traveled at night, they would look at the North Star and they would know which way was north. Then they knew which way to go.

The Bible talks about men who looked at the sky and followed a star. The star probably wasn't the North Star, but this star told them which way to go. Who am I talking about? (Wise men) The wise men were smart men who studied the stars. One night, out of thousands of stars, they saw one really, really bright star. They knew something important had happened. What had happened? (Jesus' birth)

Jesus' birth was so important that the wise men traveled thousands of miles, always following God's star, just to see Jesus. They were excited when the star stopped right above where Jesus was. The wise men went into the house, and do you know what they did before they gave Jesus their gifts? They bowed down and worshiped him! They had read the scriptures, and they knew that Jesus was not an ordinary baby. The wise men knew that Jesus was a king, who was God's son. After they worshiped Jesus, they gave him gifts. What were the gifts? (gold, frankincense, myrrh)

God put that special star in the sky to show the wise men the way to Jesus. We need to follow the star also. We need to read the Bible, and we will find our way to Jesus. Then God's light will shine in us, and we will show others the way to Jesus too.

Unwrap package. As you unwrap, mention that you had to unwrap the package three times. From the Old Testament we have a Chrismon of a gift to remind us that Jesus is a gift from God. God gave people this gift because God loves us. From the New Testament we have a Chrismon of a star to remind us to follow the star – to follow the light of Jesus.

Prayer: God, we thank you for sending Jesus to earth. We thank you that the light of Jesus shines to show us the way to you. Amen.

Give each child a star saying: Show others the way!