

A very eco-friendly Advent



1. A Peaceful Christmas

*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*
John 14:27

Christmas can be so stressful; it flies by in a blur of Christmas lights, noise and wrapping paper. But that's not what Christmas used to be, and not what it needs to be, at least this year. Why not try something different: making moments, and memories, leave the stress at the stable door.

This advent calendar offers suggestions and inspiration for a simple Christmas that brings you peace, hope, love and joy. Today, as a family, strike up a conversation - maybe on your commute or over a warm drink in the evening. Think about the thing that is the most important to your family about Christmas, aside from presents (but that can be part of it). Then think about what is the most stressful thing about Christmas. Make a plan as a family to try to strip back the stressful bits, but keep the bits *that bring joy*.

2. Reduce

“there was no room for them in the inn.”
Luke 2:7

As you plan for Christmas, as a family think about how you can be more caring for the planet. Perhaps it's reducing the food you buy because you end up throwing half of it away, or perhaps it's around gifts. Why not try doing one or two gifts for each of these areas:

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| ★ Something you want, | ★ Something to wear, |
| ★ Something you need, | ★ Something to read. |

I will say stockings can be left as is!

3. Shed some light

*"I am the light
of the world."*

John 8:12

During Advent, we are in the "gestation period", just like when a baby grows before they are born. We are evolving. We are growing and changing. And like expectant parents, we are also waiting.

In Advent, we mark the passage of time with candles. The candles count down each Sunday, as we anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. Candles are a symbol of warmth, comfort, human need, and defiance of fear. When we light candles, it's often for special occasions or to mark time. Why not make an advent wreath and, each Sunday, light one more candle as we get closer to the coming of Christmas? Why not go for a walk and find branches that have fallen, lichen and moss and make an eco-friendly wreath at home? Or add these to a wreath you already have!

4. Sort & Brought

*"Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts
of gold, frankincense and myrrh."*

Matthew 2:11

To get ready to make room for new things, why not go through your old items and donate them? Someone might need it more this time of year!

5. Hygge

“Even in darkness, light dawns.”

Psalm 112:4

Hygge is the Danish understanding of getting cozy and enjoying the simple and natural things in winter. Why not make a Hygge nook in your home? Maybe a window seat, cozy corner or even a cupboard can become your Hygge nook. Hang some Christmas lights, arrange some pillows, add blankets and quilts. You can also bring in things from nature too: a few rocks, some dry driftwood, or stoneware pottery. Take it to “boss-level” and make a small altar with a cross and nativity scene somewhere in or by this area. Add your favourite Christmas and advent books and head there for quiet time. At the end of the day when you come home from work or school, take a moment to cuddle up under a blanket. When you are nice and warm, put the blanket over your head for just a few seconds and close your eyes, know as you do this you are held in the mystery of the arms of God, and that even in our worst times, hope still comes.

6. DIY Nativity

*“May your word to me
be fulfilled.”*

Luke 1:38

Make your own eco-friendly nativity scene using the cardboard inners of toilet paper, or pine cones, or upcycle some clothes pegs. You can never have too many nativity sets and making your own is super fun! You can paint them to represent characters in the Christmas story. Mary can be blue, Joseph can be brown, angels can be silver, shepherds can be green and kings can be purple and gold, Google “minimalist nativity” to see how simple it could be!

7. Act of Kindness

*“So let’s strive for the things that bring peace and
that build each other up.”*

Romans 14:19

God calls us to love one another as God loves us. Loving each other can be hard sometimes, and it's not always easy to show people love in our day-to-day lives. Today, ask at least once if someone needs your help. Hold the door open for someone, ask someone you wouldn't normally ask “how are you?” Maybe help doing the dishes or offer to clean or tidy something for someone else, or do a chore together as a family. Kindness can change the world!

8. Wrapped Up

“She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger.”

Luke 2:7

A huge environmental impact from Christmas is wrapping paper, especially the kind that has foil or metallic shine as these have plastic in them and cannot be recycled. What if we took a leaf out of Mary's book, and wrapped things with cloths? Furoshiki is the Japanese art of wrapping things with fabric. Square pieces of patterned fabric are used to make a beautiful gift wrap that can be reused. Why not have a craft night, look up some wrapping styles and try them? Fabric sacks are also a great option as they can be reused! You could also upcycle newspaper or use packing paper to make a biodegradable alternative.

9. Chickadees & Robins

"There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers."

Psalm 104

What is your favourite bird to see at this time of year? In these colder months, we need to think of all living things and maybe even find a little joy in watching them. Take a mixture of seeds from your cupboard - flax seeds are great - and go for a walk. Sprinkle the seeds for the birds on the ground and wait to see who comes!

10. Gift of Time

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens"

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Nothing says "I love you" more than the Gift of Time. Why not try an experience gift, like a pyjama party, movie night, day out with everything planned? What makes it really special is making the event for just you and those people/person.

11. Letters, Cards & Prayers

"Come near to God and God will come near to you"

James 4:8

When you are writing your letters to Santa, or your cards to the people you love, write a card or letter to God with a prayer in it. It can be very simple, just one line. Even the phrase "Be with me" is a good one! You could also write a letter to yourself for next year. Pop it under the tree and pack it away with your decorations and when you find it next year, open it. It could be words of encouragement, or a memory, or a hope.

12. Thrifty & Crafty

“I went down to the potter's house... the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.”

Jeremiah 18:2-3

Make a plan to craft or thrift a gift or two. Maybe find an old item that has been forgotten and upcycle it as a gift. For example, an item belonging to an older relative can be framed or put in a shadow box and become an heirloom or memory. Gifts like this are both eco-friendly and budget-friendly, and crafted items can mean so much more than store-bought.

13. Saying No

“Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’”

Matthew 5:37

This Advent, say no to something that you don't really *need* to do. Give yourself permission to say no.

14. Saying Yes

“Let it be to me according to your word.”

Luke 1:38

Mary's “yes” changed the world. Say “yes” to something today. It doesn't need to be big, maybe helping a friend, or giving some socks or some money to someone in need. Small acts of kindness can send a ripple effect through the whole world!

15. Simple Pleasures

“Seek peace.”

Psalm 34

Tonight watch your favourite family Christmas movie or have a games night. You could even try turning off all the lights and having an electricity-free evening, which means only food you can eat cold, lots of candles and a lot of fun!

16. Messy

*“Yet you, Lord, are our God. We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.”*

Isaiah 64:8

Make and decorate baked goods together as a family, not for gifts, not to be like a hallmark movie, but just to do it, together. Maybe shape some bread dough or make a simple sugar cookie. Why not decorate/make them for each other as you sit around the table together? Don't be afraid to get messy!

17. Cozy Chocolate Ceremony

“Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad.”

Psalm 35

Have a Cozy Chocolate Ceremony. Make a really good batch of Hot Chocolate together. On the stove is best with your choice of milk, be sure to add marshmallows! When you are drinking it together, take turns sharing something that you are thankful for this week.

18. Nature

*“Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God”*

Romans 8:39

Whatever the weather is today, get outside, even for just 10 minutes. Find a pine cone, or a rock you like and bring it home. Hold it in your hand and know how interconnected we are to all of God’s Creation.

19. Music

“Sing to the Lord with grateful praise; make music to our God”

Psalm 147

Today talk about your favourite Christmas songs and carols. You could make a playlist or have a sing-a-long if your family is musical.

20. Looking Ahead

*“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life... Can any one of you by worrying
add a single hour to your life ?”*

Matthew 6:25

Make a list of some things you want to do as a family this coming year, one goal each. Maybe it’s to go camping together, or go visit a relative.

21. Looking Behind

*“For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.”*

Psalm 139

Pull out the photo albums and look at those baby photos! Reminisce and laugh together, let it kindle your hearts as we move closer to Christmas.

22. Food Glorious Food

*“For the bread of God is the bread that comes
down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

John 6:33

As you grab the final pieces of your Christmas food shopping, try to think about how you can use left-overs and be less wasteful in those preparations. You can save all your vegetable scraps and use them to make stock. You can save your orange peel from your stockings and candy it or dehydrate it for use in cooking. There are a bunch of zero-waste ideas and tips online. You don’t have to do them all, but just being mindful of what we buy and what ends up going in the trash can make a huge difference.

23. Do Little

“Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord.”

Exodus 16:23

As we approach Christmas, try to rest today. Maybe have a nap, or do a movie marathon with all the blankets, get to bed early, have a bath, or read your book. Try to live into what it means to rest and have a sabbath, even for an hour!

24. Christ Child

*“Give glory to God in heaven,
and on earth peace to those who please God.”*

Luke 2:14

Tonight as you go to bed all excited, read a book about the Nativity, or read the Children’s Bible passage below. As you do it, feel the blankets wrapped snug around you and know that in that same way, God wraps you in love too.

At that time, Augustus Caesar sent an order to all people in the countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that they must list their names in a register. This was the first registration taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to their own towns to be registered.

So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea. This town was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. Joseph registered with Mary because she was engaged to marry him. (Mary was now pregnant.) While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby. She gave birth to her first son. There were no rooms left in the inn. So she wrapped the baby with cloths and laid him in a box where animals are fed. That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. An angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and suddenly they became very frightened. The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, because I am bringing you some good news. It will be a joy to all the people. Today your Savior was born in David’s town. He is Christ, the Lord. This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding box (manger).” Then a huge group of angels from heaven joined the first angel. All the angels were praising God, saying:

*“Give glory to God in heaven,
and on earth peace to those who please God.”*

Then the angels left the shepherds and went back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened. We will see this thing the Lord told us about." So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph. And the shepherds saw the baby lying in a feeding box. Then they told what the angels had said about this child. Everyone was amazed when they heard what the shepherds said to them. Mary hid these things in her heart; she continued to think about them. Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything that they had seen and heard. It was just as the angel had told them.



*Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year!*