

10 ideas for...

Advent

1. Jesse Tree

Jesse Trees are a very old Christmas Tradition and first started in medieval times. They are used to help tell the story of the Bible from creation to the Christmas Story. The name comes from Jesse who was the Father of the great Jewish King David – see Isaiah 11:1-4. You can use a normal Christmas tree or a banner in the shape of a tree. Each day through advent a special decoration that tells a story from the Bible, is hung on the tree. The decorations are usually either a drawn or creatively made symbol of each story.

2. Posada

Originating in Hispanic countries to celebrate the nativity story, Posada is a period of time during Advent when figures from the nativity story travel around different households in the community and stay there for one night. Different people sign up to take part and then become hosts to the holy family for one night during Advent.

3. Multi-Generational

Advent is a great time to include everyone that may not normally get to do things in church. Why not have people of all ages do the readings, prayers, candle lighting etc

4. Sleep under the tree

If you are a church that puts a Christmas Tree up, why not make it a community event and have everyone come and help decorate it? Afterwards you could encourage people to sleep under the tree (or in the church in general) - This might work well for uniformed organisations.

5. Advent Candles

If you link your Advent Candles to particular characters or themes (such as love, hope, joy & peace) each week, then why not have them in each corner of the church instead of in a 'crown' and surround them with objects that represent the theme/character. You could also link creative prayer activities to each area.

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6. A time of...

Have somewhere (such as a notice board) where visitors to the church can complete the sentence 'Advent is a time of...'. Answers could be positive or negative, they could come from themes in services or kids groups or tourists etc. Examples might include; waiting, watching, praying, listening, preparing, remembering, anticipating, renewal, wonder etc.

7. Prayer on faith, love & peace

You may like to use the following prayer by John Birch in each of your Advent services. It covers the themes of faith, love and peace in a consumerist world.

In this confused and fragile world, strengthen our faith, increase our love, and let your peace flow through us, that we might be an ocean of calm in what has become a restless sea.

8. #thisgirlcan

Unlike Luke, Matthew included 4 women in the genealogy of Christ. Why not focus on those 4 women during your advent services? There must be something exceptional about Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba you can read their stories in Genesis 38 & Ruth 4:12, Joshua 2:1-21; 6:17-25, the book of Ruth and 2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Kings 1:11-37; 2:12-25.

9. Lessons and Carols

The traditional service of 9 lessons and carols is a simple and dignified affair. It tells the Christmas story in a very accessible way. You can however, use the concept in other ways—you can choose contemporary readings and songs (linking to Christmas themes) or create home group materials, prayer stations or community art projects based on the readings.

10. Narnia

Set up your church as the winter wonderland of Narnia and run events based on the stories. Heidi Haverkamp has written a book with fantastic reflections you can use...

Haverkamp. Heidi, *Advent in Narnia : Reflections for the season* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2015)