

Silent night, holy night,

SON OF GOD

*love's
pure light...*



French River Lutheran Christmas Eve Candlelight Service



December 24, 2023 Worship~4pm

Pastor Kimberly Sturtz – Presiding

Organist: David Fiebiger

French River Ringers – Director Elda Hein

French River Choir – Director David Fiebiger

Riversong Rising

Ushers: Sue & Steve Baker

Lector: Haeli Pettis

Worship Assistants: Haeli Pettis

Welcome to all in Jesus' Name!

LARGE PRINT worship folders are available from an usher.

A family restroom and nursery are to the left of the sanctuary. To contact the pastor or church office, you are invited to complete a pew card and return the information portion either to an usher or by way of the offering plate. Please keep the bookmark and worship with us again! We appreciate electronic devices set on “mute” during the service.

Please note: flameless candles are available from an usher for those who wish to use them.

Bold print signals places where the assembly speaks in unity in worship.

*Indicates where to stand as you are able in body or in Spirit.

— **GATHERING** —

The Holy Spirit gathers us together as the people of God.

Prelude: “Angels We Have Heard On High”

~French River Ringers

Welcome & Greeting:

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Community of the Holy Spirit be with you all. And also with you. Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: “Once in Royal David’s City”**

ELW 269

Once in Royal David’s City



1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle shed,
2 He came down to earth from heav - en who is God and Lord of all,
3 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re - deem - ing love;
4 Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the ox - en stand - ing by,



where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a man - ger for his bed:
and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his cra - dle was a stall;
for that child so dear and gen - tle is our Lord in heav' n a - bove;
we shall see him; but in heav - en, set at God's right hand on high;



Mar - y was that moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.
with the poor and meek and low - ly, lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.
and he leads his chil - dren on to the place where he is gone.
there his chil - dren gath - er round, bright like stars, with glo - ry crowned.

Text: Cecil Frances Alexander, 1818–1895
Music: IRBY, Henry J. Gauntlett, 1805–1876

***Call to Worship Lighting of Advent Candles & Christ Candle:**

“How the Light Comes For Christmas Eve” - *By Jan Richardson*

I cannot tell you how the light comes.

What I know is that it is more ancient than imagining.

That it travels across an astounding expanse to reach us.

That it loves searching out what is hidden, what is lost, what is forgotten or in peril or in pain.

That it has a fondness for the body, for finding its way toward flesh, for tracing the edges of form, for shining forth through the eye, the hand, the heart.

I cannot tell you how the light comes, but that it does. That it will.

That it works its way into the deepest dark that enfolds you, though it may seem long ages in coming or arrive in a shape you did not foresee.

And so may we this day turn ourselves toward it.

May we lift our faces to let it find us.

The Light comes this night, to hold us all in a hope we never imagined.

The hope comes to us in Emmanuel, God with us.

(Richardson, Jan. Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons . Wanton Gospeller Press. Kindle Edition.)

———— **WORD** ————

God speaks to us through scripture, preaching, and song.

Children’s Message:

The Reverend Kimberly Sturtz

Invocation of the Light:

Precious Holy One, A brief look at the news shouts out that there are many dark places in our world. Holy One, into these names and unnamed dark places of fear and loneliness. **Pour out your radiance.**

Break through pure brilliance until the darkness is dispelled and our hearts find peace and the light of hope can shine forth again fresh and new with this new day.

Shower down your light. Hear our prayers we pray. Amen.

Christmas Prophecy: Isaiah 9 *(read responsively)*

Haeli Pettis

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Those who lived in the land of deep darkness – on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;

We rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest.

For unto us a child is born ... unto us a son is given.

And he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

FRLC Choir Anthem: "No Candle Was There, and No Fire"

~*Liza Lehmann*

Psalm: Psalm 96

Haeli Pettis

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad. (Ps. 96:11)

Sing to the Lord a new song;

 sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, bless the name of the Lord;

 proclaim God's salvation from day to day.

Declare God's glory among the nations

 and God's wonders among all peoples.

For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised,

 more to be feared than all gods.

As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;

 but you, O Lord, have made the heavens.

Majesty and magnificence are in your presence;

 power and splendor are in your sanctuary.

Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples,

 ascribe to the Lord honor and power.

Ascribe to the Lord the honor due the holy name;

 bring offerings and enter the courts of the Lord.

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;

 tremble before the Lord, all the earth.

Tell it out among the nations: "The Lord is king!

 The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity."

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;

 let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O Lord,

 for you come to judge the earth.

You will judge the world with righteousness

 and the peoples with your truth.

***Gospel Acclamation: "Angels we Have Heard On High"**

V. 1, *ELW 289*

"Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains. And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

Glo--ria! In Excelsis Deo! Glo--ria! In Excelsis D-e-o!"

***Gospel: Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]**

The Holy Gospel according to Luke the 2nd chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.]

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Christmas Message:

The Reverend Kimberly Sturtz

***Hymn of Celebration: "What Child is This"**

ELW 296

What Child Is This



1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mar - y's lap is sleep - ing?
2 Why lies he in such mean es - tate where ox and ass are feed - ing?
3 So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, peas - ant, king, to own him.



Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet while shep - herds watch are keep - ing?
Good Chris - tian, fear; for sin - ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing.
The King of kings sal - va - tion brings; let lov - ing hearts en - throne him.



This, this is Christ the king, whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing;
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
Raise, raise the song on high, the vir - gin sings her lul - la - by;



haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mar - y!

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898
Music: GREENSLEEVES, English ballad, 16th cent.

***Peace:**

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.** Staying in your pews, but turning around, I invite you to share that same peace with your neighbors.

Peace Be With You.

Prayers of Intercession:

Haeli Pettis

(After each petitions the congregation responds with “receive our prayer”)

Joining our voices with the heavenly host and Christians throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

(A brief silence.)

Love proclaims that a Savior has been born to us! Inspire your church throughout the world to proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth to all who seek salvation, hope, and new life. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Love whispers to a weary world that the time for rest and restoration has come. Maintain healthy cycles of wake and sleep for all creatures. Where light pollution disrupts natural rhythms, encourage new practices. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Love cries to a warring world that the time for peace is at hand. Direct those in power who make decisions on behalf of others, that they nurture and sustain all that is healthy, good, and holy. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Love sings through the wails of a newborn baby. Respond to all who cry out in pain, despair, or need this night. Bring comfort to those for whom separation, grief, or loss makes the Christmas season especially difficult. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Love murmurs words of comfort to a newborn child and exhausted parents. Bless new and expectant parents or caregivers, especially those who are alone or afraid this night. Pour out your love upon families of every kind. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

God's ever-present love is proclaimed through the faithful who came before us. We give you thanks for Mary, John the baptizer, Elizabeth his mother, Joseph the dreamer, and all who point toward your love. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Rejoicing in your Word made flesh among us, we commend these prayers to you, confident of your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.
Amen.

***Offering:**

(If you did not place your offering in the plate as you entered the sanctuary, please feel free to hand it to an usher upon dismissal. During the week, offerings may be placed in the secure lockbox by the lower doors [slot is right of the door]. Mail and online giving are also available. Thank you for your generous support of our ministry together!))

***Offertory Response & Prayer:**

Let us pray. Generous God, you have given us life, this community, and these gifts of the earth that become the meal of your grace. Move in our hearts, that we might use our gifts to bring hope and blessing wherever we go, through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

———— MEAL ————

God feeds us in goodness and grace with the presence of Jesus Christ.

All are welcome at the Lord's Table to receive the true presence of Jesus in the bread and wine. Communion will be distributed continuously using the form of intinction. After you have received the bread, you may "intinct" (dip) it in the wine or juice. Children not communing may come forward for a blessing. Commune with the pastor if you prefer a gluten-free wafer.

***Confession and Forgiveness:**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who sends the word with angels,
who is made flesh among all peoples,
and who breathes peace on all the earth.
Amen.

In Christ, we are bold to name our sin and cry out for peace.
(Silence is kept for reflection.)

Holy God,
we confess our sin before you.
We replace compassion with competition.
We seek what is mighty while ignoring the meek.
We are quick to anger but slow to forgive.
We have not put on love in harmony with you.
Wrap us in the grace of your powerful Word.
Swaddle our hearts with your peace,
that all we do, in word or deed,
may reflect your love born among us. Amen.

I bring you good news of great joy for all people:
God has come among us, in the child born of Mary, Christ the Lord.
✠ In Christ your sins are forgiven and you are clothed in peace. **Amen.**

***Words of Institution:**

***The Lord's Prayer:**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

***Communion Invitation:**

In Christ's manger, at Christ's table,
come, taste and see this grace for you and for all.

Communion Music:

"He Shall Reign Forever More"

"His Name is Wonderful"

Riversong Rising

~Chris Tomlin

~Chris Tomlin

***Post Communion Prayer:**

Let us pray. Emmanuel, God with us, you grace us with life and breath and give us bread for the journey. Send us out in service to this world that you love, telling the amazing news of your coming to be Savior and Lord of all. **Amen.**

***Introduction to Candle Lighting:**

Lights off in Sanctuary, choir loft, and narthex:

(An acolyte will bring the Light to the ushers. Ushers will walk to back of sanctuary and distribute it from the center aisle to each pew. Acolyte will distribute light to pews starting with the front row. Tip unlighted candles to receive the flame from those already lit. As candles light sanctuary —Pastor will read John 1:5)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and

without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

***Candle Lighting Hymn: “Silent Night” (by candlelight)**

ELW 281

Silent Night, Holy Night!
Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht!



Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,
 1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,
 2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
 3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,



ein - sam wacht nur das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.
 all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.
 at the sight; glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
 love's pure light ra - diant beams from your ho - ly face,



Hold - er Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, schlaf in himm - li - scher
 Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly
 heav'n - ly hosts . . . sing, al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is
 with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at your



Ruh, schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh.
 peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
 born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
 birth, Je - sus, Lord, at your birth.

Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792–1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820–1885
 Music: STILLE NACHT, Franz Gruber, 1787–1863

The Light now shines in the darkness. The true light that gives light to everyone has come into the world. For Jesus said: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

—Lights on—

(Candles may now be extinguished. For Real Candles: Please keep them upright through the end of the service to help them dry properly. For Battery Operated: Please make sure switch is off. Gently deposit candles in the bin as you leave the sanctuary.)

— SENDING —
God blesses us and sends us into the world.

***Blessing & Sending:**

Thou wondrous star of Bethlehem,
O let your gentle glow shine over us with hope and peace,
in every house and home,
in the name of Christ Emmanuel,
God with Us. **Amen.**

***Sending Hymn: “O Come, All Ye Faithful”**

ELW 283

O, Come, All Ye Faithful



1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant! O
2 The high - est, most ho - ly, light of light e - ter - nal,
3 Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,
4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing;



come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;
born of a vir - gin, a mor - tal he comes;
sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heav - en a - bove!
Je - sus, to thee be . . . glo - ry giv'n!

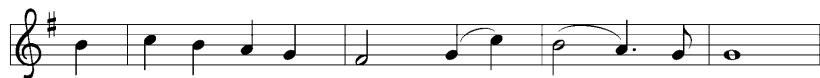


come and be - hold him, born the king of an - gels:
Son of the Fa - ther now in flesh ap - pear - ing!
Glo - ry to God . . . in . . . the . . . high - est:
Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing:

Refrain



Ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus, ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus,
O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,



ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus Do - mi - num.
O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord!

***Dismissal:**

Christ is Born! Hallelujah let us prepare him room! **Thanks be to God!**

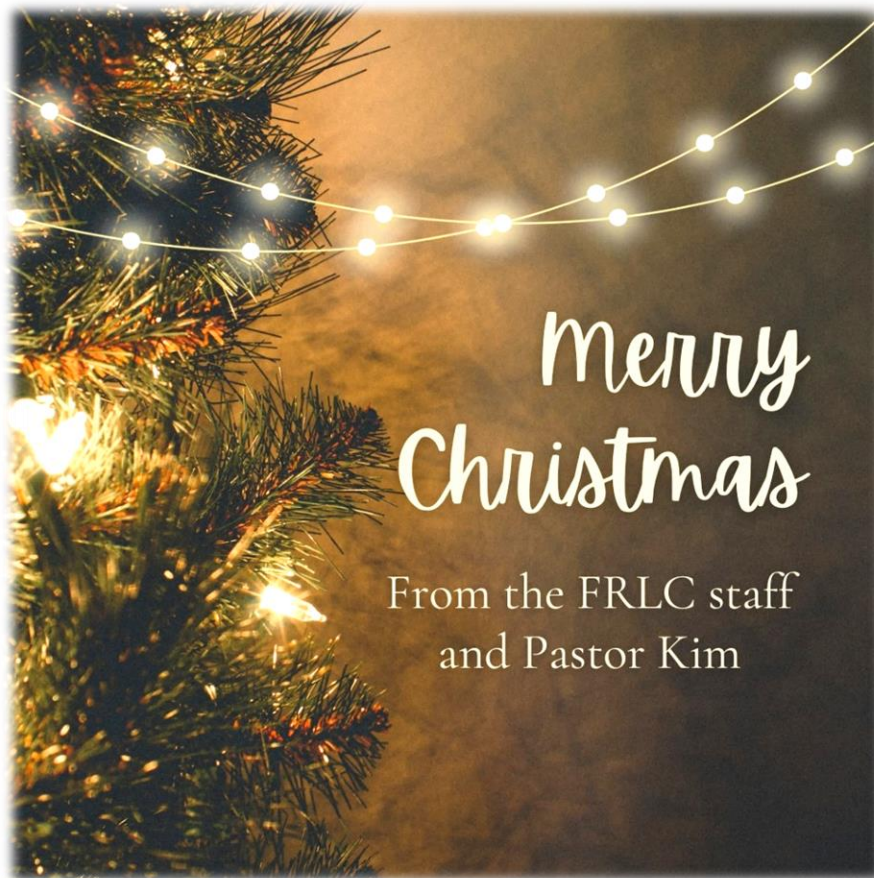
(ushers will excuse you from the back of the church to the front. Please carry out all bulletins and communion refuse to recycling bin or garbage can. Candles can be placed in the bin in the back of the church)

***Postlude: "Joy to the World"**

~French River Ringers

***Hope Shines forth this day!
Share this joy with all the world in healing and wholeness!
Merry Christmas!***

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*The special offerings from this service will be given to the Damiano Center
and Union Gospel Mission.*

Thank you.

Welcome to French River Lutheran Church

You are welcome; to keep this bulletin however, we recycle when possible so you may leave it on the ushers' stand.



Immediate: Family & friends of Pr. Art Solberg; Family & friends of Rita Cook; Family and friends of Paul B. Peterson; Carol Pearson; Bonnie Smrstick; prayers for peace and comfort both as she travels to be with Dennis as he is nearing the end of his journey.; Deb Sodomka (cousin of Bill & Susie Lannon).

Long-Term: Phil Strom, for Parkinsons; Julie Moe-Hommerding; 5-year-old great niece of Susie Lannon (heart surgery 6/26/17, still not healthy); Kathy Johnson (Carol Leppala's friend); Bruce Sundberg; Angela Debelak, (niece of Gail Johnson) is currently in remission from for her brain cancer and recovering slowly; please continue to pray for no recurrence.; Alex Peterson – military service; David Peterson (brother of Paul Peterson); Todd Sironen.

WHEN SUBMITTING A NAME TO THE TELEPHONE PRAYER CHAIN, PLEASE INDICATE IF IT IS PERMISSABLE TO LIST IN THE BULLETIN.

<i>Called by the Spirit</i>	<i>December 24 AM/PM</i>	<i>December 31</i>
Worship Leader	Rev. Kim Sturtz	Rhil Jensen
Lector	Skipper Sironen	FRLC Youth
Altar Guild	Lynne Compton	Brita Aug
Ushers	Dick & Marilyn/Sue & Steve	T.B.D.
Counters/Worship Assistant*	Sue Baker/Dave Edblom*	Sheila Laiti / Haeli Pettis*
Coffee Fellowship	--	Don Mattson
Prayer Chain	Babs Strom 218.525.6200	

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 Church: (218)525-5659; frlc5310@gmail.com
 Pr. Kim Sturtz: (218)393-7444; frlcpastorsturtz@gmail.com
 Office hours vary so please call ahead.
 FRLC webpage: www.frenchriverlutheran.org.
 FRLC Mission: *“To live and love as God commands, accept His grace, and share the Good News.”*

Watch services at FRLC anytime! **YouTube live streaming of the service** at
<https://www.youtube.com/c/FrenchRiverLutheranChurch>
 This link is also found on our church homepage and Facebook group. If you are unable to watch it live, you can view it any time after the service by following the same link.

✝ We're glad you worshiped with us today. Thanks be to God! ✝

On Christmas, we hear new hymns. Which ones do you hear in your worship space?

Match the title of the hymn on the left with the illustration on the right. Be sure to include your favorites!

Go Tell It on the Mountain



Away in a Manger



Joy to the World



Angels We Have Heard on High



PRE-READER

Christmas Eve

- Today is **Christmas Eve**. We celebrate **Jesus' birth!**
- One **symbol** we see at Christmas is the **manger**.
- A manger is a place where animals eat. It was also **Jesus' first bed!**

Jesus was born in a stable, but he was not alone. Listen to the Christmas story. Then draw the animals you think were with Jesus. Don't forget Mary and Joseph!

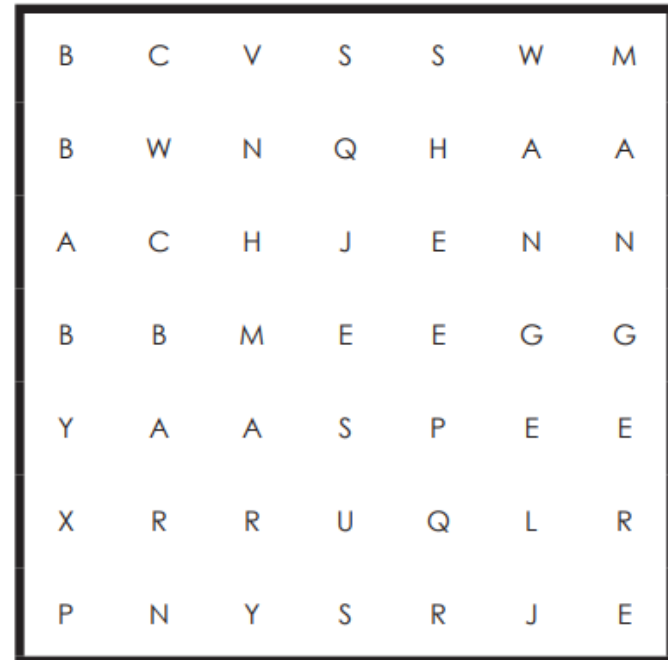




“I bring wonderful news. The child God promised was born tonight.”

Mary and Joseph had to find a place to sleep when they arrived in Bethlehem.

Find pieces of their story in the word search below.



baby
angel
manger
sheep

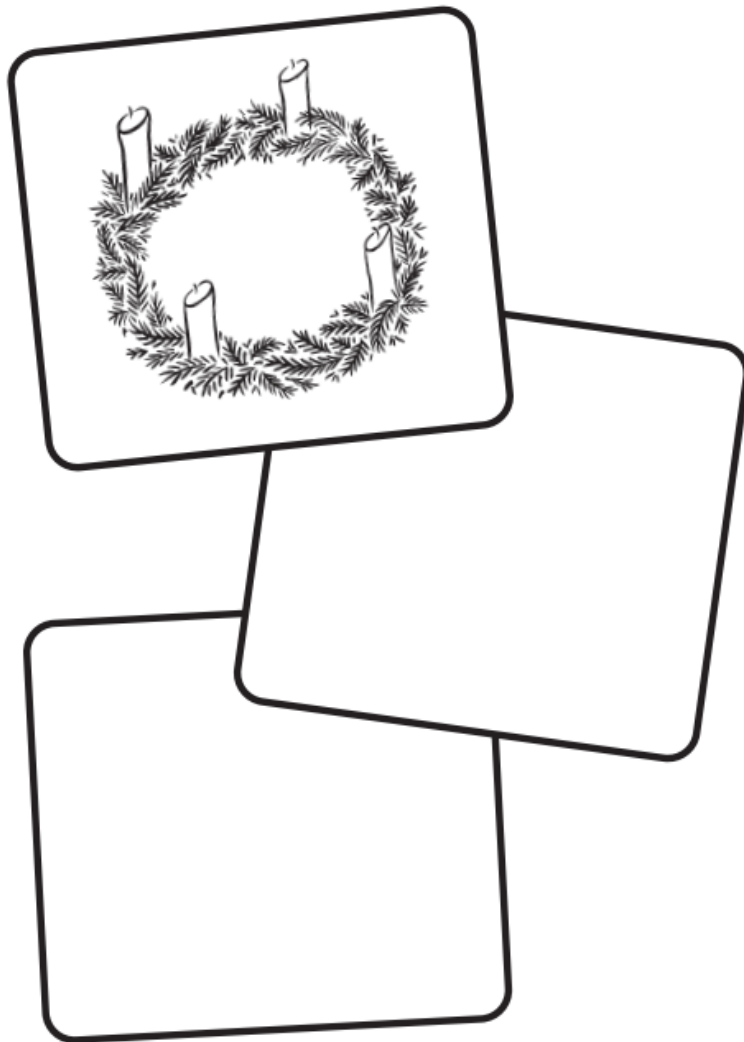
Mary
barn
Jesus

Decoration Preparation

A common Advent symbol is the Advent wreath.

First, color one of the candles in the Advent wreath below.

Next, look for any new decorations you see in your worship space and sketch them here. Then, sketch any new decorations you have seen in your home.



READER

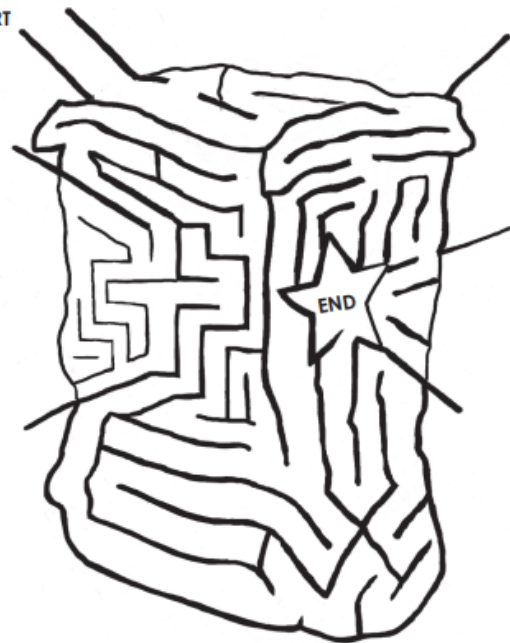
Advent 1

- Today is the **1st Sunday** in Advent.
- There are **4 weeks** of Advent.
- During Advent we **prepare** for Christmas.
- One symbol for Advent is the **luminary**.
- A luminary is something that **gives off light**.

Season of Light

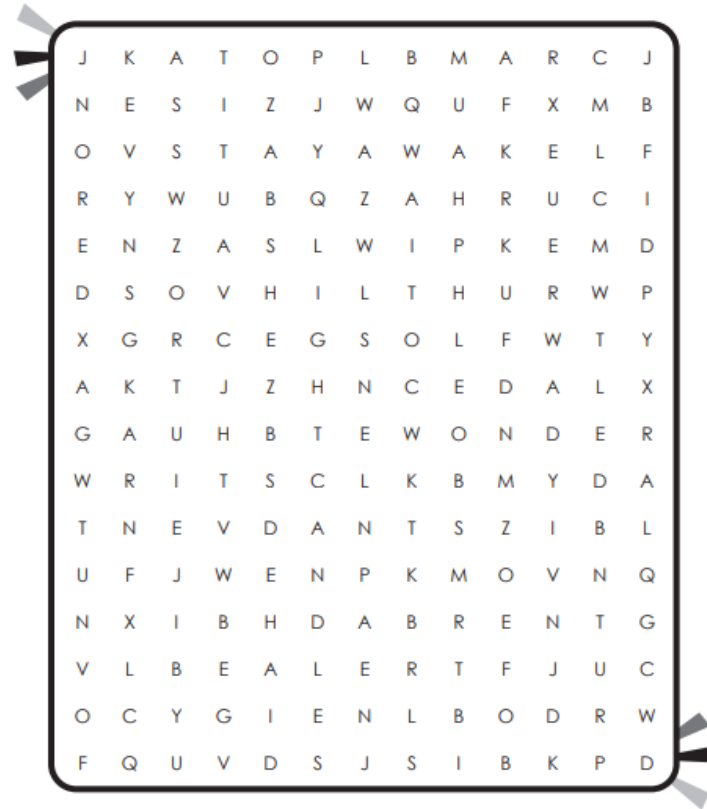
Advent is all about getting ready for Jesus! Music and decorations change as we prepare for the joys of Christmas. Find your way to the light-filled center of this luminary.

START



Advent Words

Advent is here. We know that Jesus is coming. Can you find these Advent words in the word search?

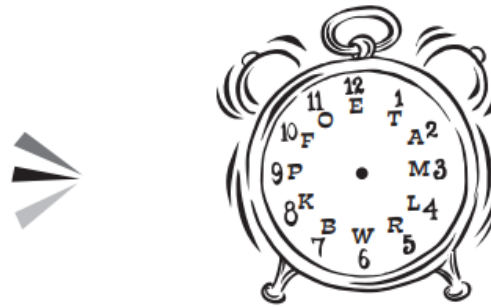


WATCH WAIT WONDER ADVENT STAY AWAKE
BE ALERT JESUS IS COMING LIGHT CANDLES

It is important to be ready for Jesus! Crack the code to find a memory verse from the Gospel of Mark.



" 7 12 6 2 5 12 ,
8 12 12 9 2 4 12 5 1 ;
10 11 5 you do not 8 n 11 6
6 h 12 n 1 h 12 1 i 3 12
6 i 4 4 c 11 3 12 ." Mark 13:33.



Look it Up!

Isaiah describes God as the potter and us as the clay. Look up the passage Isaiah 64:1-9. How has God shaped your life? Write or draw about it on this clay pot.