

Come To The  
**MANGER**

- Luke 2:7

**ADVENT 2019**

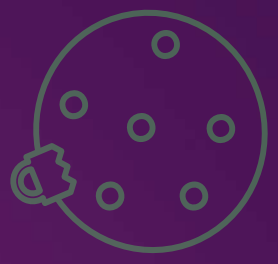
DECEMBER 1-24

**ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH**

Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, Senior Pastor



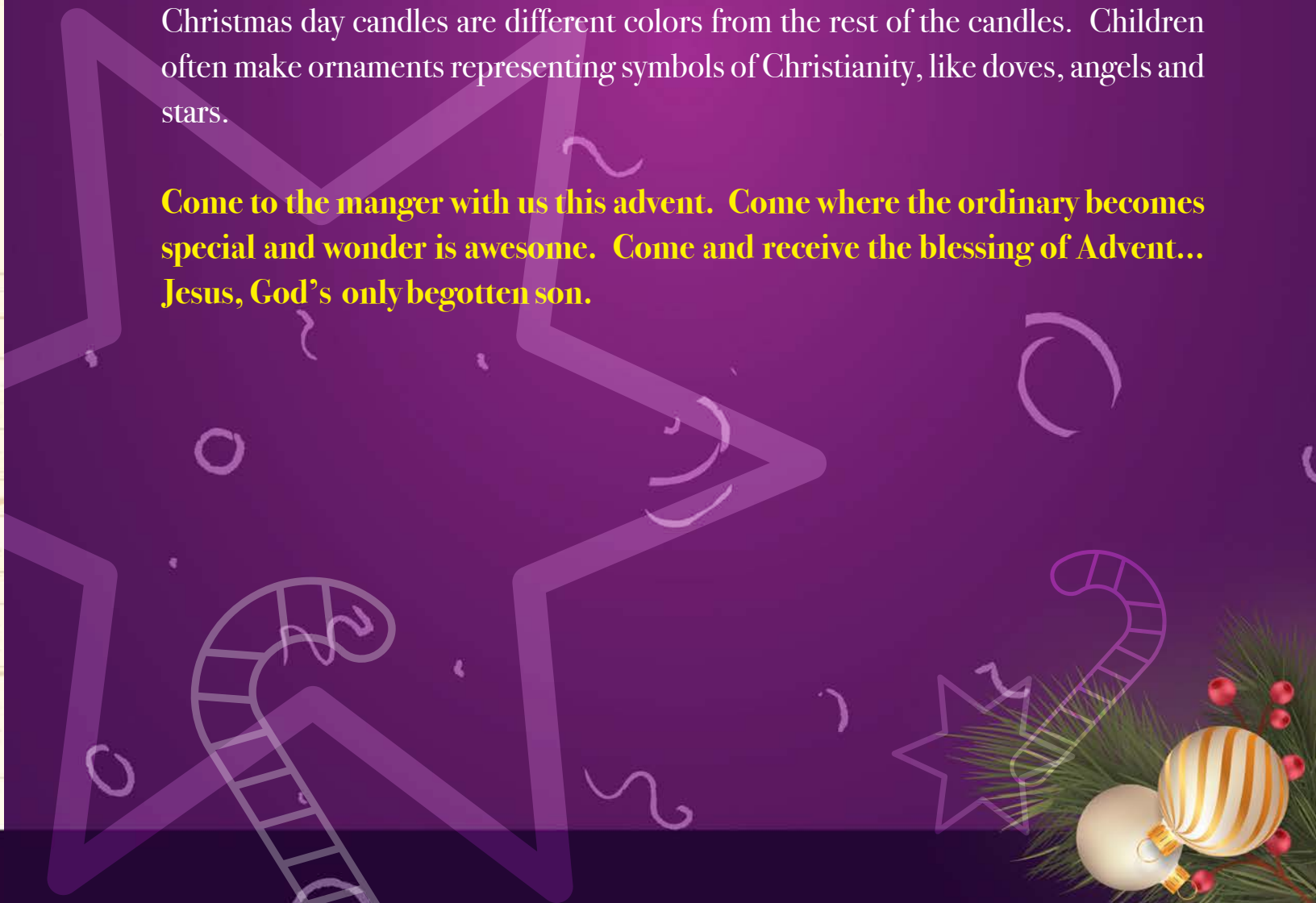
# WHAT IS Advent?



Advent is the period preceding Christmas Day that begins the nearest Sunday to November 30 and covers four Sundays. Because the day it begins changes from year to year, so does the length of each advent season. Advent 2019 begins on December 1 and ends December 24th. Advent is a time of preparing, sharing, and reflecting that leads up to celebrating the birth of Jesus our Lord. Christian families often light candles on advent wreaths, share faith stories, and find quiet moments to reflect on what the birth of Jesus really means.

Each Sunday at worship services an advent candle is lighted, and passages of scripture are shared about hope, love, joy and peace. Usually, the Christmas eve and Christmas day candles are different colors from the rest of the candles. Children often make ornaments representing symbols of Christianity, like doves, angels and stars.

**Come to the manger with us this advent. Come where the ordinary becomes special and wonder is awesome. Come and receive the blessing of Advent... Jesus, God's only begotten son.**



# AN ADVENT MESSAGE FROM REV. MARLA C. HAWKINS



Our Advent focus this year is on the manger where Jesus was placed at his birth. Often times we see symbols but miss the message that they bring. The manger though a simple feeding device, holds significant meanings worth our consideration. Perhaps coming to the manger means considering a lowly place where seemingly nothing significant happens.

Also, It could mean to come to an unlikely place to receive a miracle. None the less, This is a time to meet Jesus at the manger, see the angels proclaim the everlasting miracle and be in the presence of the prince of peace.

These prayers, meditations, devotions and reflections are designed to encourage new discoveries from the messages that emanate from the manger where baby Jesus laid. Let this advent publication be a catalyst to spending quality time with family, becoming revitalized after a long day at work, channeling the boundless energy of children and just relaxing in the assurance of God's love.

Whatever your activity of choice, just come to the manger and receive the everlasting blessings of hope, joy, peace and love that only Jesus brings.

Come to the manger, now!

Because He Came,

*Rev. Marla C. Hawkins*

ASSISTANT TO THE PASTOR FOR CHILDREN



# ADVENT Symbols



**MANGER:** a makeshift crib for the baby Jesus associated with the nativity scene where Mary and Joseph are forced, out of necessity, to stay in a room for animals instead of a guest room.



**CIRCLES:** the circle represents many things in life. However, the circle during this season represents the eternal, the never ending. Jesus came into the world that we might have eternal life.



**GIFTS:** why do we give gifts during this season? A gift is a voluntary expression of love that expects nothing in return. Just as the “magi” brought gifts to Jesus to show their love for him, we give gifts to spread love to one another.



**ANGELS:** angel means messenger. An angel is a messenger of God to his people. Therefore, the message of the angels is important and allows us to understand the whole experience of the Christmas season.



**THE INFANT JESUS:** The purpose of advent is to celebrate and seek to understand the true meaning of Jesus’ birth. As Jesus came in an unexpected way, so must we open our hearts to God’s unexpected events in our lives.



# A LETTER FROM "MANGER"

Greetings to all this advent season,

Let me introduce myself. My name is "Manger." I am a long open box of either stone or wood where cattle, horses and other animals feed. I don't need a special place to be, I fit wherever there is a corner and I'm usually a welcomed sight since hunger is what I satisfy. The only thing that puzzles me is that those who are fed by me rarely see me, they see only my contents. But something happened that changed how I was seen and I never could have imagined the events that took place.

One night a couple came to the inn where I live. It seemed that they had been all over town seeking lodging with no success. The innkeeper where I live told them that the only room he had was in the stable. Since the woman's time to give birth had come, they accepted the offer. I must admit, I saw it as a bit of an intrusion. Never before had a couple used the stable as a lodging place and I did not know how the livestock would react. However, when they came in not one of us stirred and a peaceful quiet came over all. Soon after the couple came in, the baby was born and a bright light seemed to shine through the roof, as if to signal the coming of something special. All the animals, who would usually be asleep during this time remained wide awake with eyes glued on the precious baby that had been wrapped and placed inside of me.

I must tell you that holding a baby was a strange experience for me. I wondered if the baby would be comfortable lying inside of my hard structure. To my surprise, the baby did not even whimper and a certain joy filled my very being. Suddenly my function in life changed...I beheld the most precious gift to the world, baby Jesus. I was changed from a crude feeding trough to a crib for a precious baby. never did I think that I would be so honored. From that day to this day, life has never been the same and though my contents may change, the miracle baby Jesus gave me is with me forever.

Come visit me this Advent. I don't know what miracle you will receive but I know there is a miracle with your name on it from the baby Jesus.

With love,  
"Manger"

# ADVENT PRAYERS & POEMS

What can I give him?  
Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd,  
I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man  
I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give him----  
I will give my heart.

*Christina Rosette*

Generous God,  
You have come to us in Jesus, the light of the world.  
As this food and drink give us refreshment,  
Strengthen us by your spirit,  
That as your sons and daughters  
We share your light with all the world.  
Grant this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

*Anonymous*

Christ is born for us! O come, let us adore him!  
Lord Jesus, come to us now and bless this food and drink  
So that we may be strengthened to serve you  
And speak your love in all we do.

*Amen*

Here is the stable  
Where Jesus was born  
And was laid in the manger  
The first Christmas morn.

And Mary and Joseph  
And cattle and sheep  
Smiled down on the baby  
And watched him, asleep.

*Anonymous*

Lord Jesus,  
may our words of peace and acts of  
justice reflect your presence. Amen

*Anonymous*

I do not fear----  
The Lord is near  
Through this dark night  
As in the light.  
And while I sleep  
Safe watch will keep.

I do not fear----  
Jesus is here.

*Anonymous*



# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This small book is filled with many treasures that will lead the household of faith through advent into Christmas. It can be used many different ways depending on your daily schedule and particular needs. Use whatever works well in your home. Enhance the suggestions in this book with family favorites to include customs, prayers, and songs you cherish.

Some people may only want to use this book as a primary source of scripture reading and reflection. To that end meditations are provided. For meditation use, you will find prayers and poems along with special questions to ponder.

The advent season is one of the few times in the year when many people do not hesitate to sing carols and Christmas songs with friends and family. Feel free to choose a favorite carol as a way of introducing a time of reflection and meditation with family members.

The advent season also brings much activity to other households. Relatives and friends gather at different households to enjoy special meals, favorite games and movies. If this is true of your household, some of the prayers included might be just the touch your celebration needs.

Since “Manger” has a daily conversation with you, please take the opportunity to write your personal reflections each day. Should the opportunity present itself, share a reflection with a friend or family member.

Lastly, try a recipe found in this book, invite family members to assist with preparation or have a taste testing party and share your newly found treat.

As you use this book, may you experience God in all his presence throughout advent and Christmas day.





# Daily Conversations with "Manger"

## DAY 1 MEDITATION: ISAIAH 64:1-9

"Since my encounter with baby Jesus I have come to know that I hold wonder and satisfaction deep inside me. Prior to meeting Jesus, I had no reason to feel surprise mingled with admiration. Everything seemed humdrum and it seemed there was no such thing as the unexpected. Have you ever felt this way before?"

Write down your thoughts:

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## DAY 2 MEDITATION: JEREMIAH 29:11

"The baby Jesus somehow called me to analyze my lack of self-expectations. I didn't realize that I housed the sacred. Little did I know that the Jesus in me called me out of the ordinary, just by living inside me."

Any connections to these feelings? Write them down.

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## DAY 3 MEDITATION: LUKE 1:68

"I discovered that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Though I am a box, I am well put together and with Jesus inside me I am not subject to tip over. God has redeemed me."

Do you feel well supported? Explain why or why not.

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## DAY 4 MEDITATION: ISAIAH 11:1-2

"Along with being well supported, I feel I am protected. God has sent me the ultimate protection through his son Jesus. I am protected by God's wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge. There is no failure in God. Though I may be called to accommodate many at one time, I will not fail because God is my protection."

Share an encounter with Jesus that let you know you were well protected.

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# Daily Conversations with "Manger"

## DAY 5 MEDITATION: ISAIAH 40:1

"Being afraid will get you nowhere fast. But I have come to learn that God gives us comfort through his son who brings peace. This peace is often not understood but experienced as the animals and I beheld the peacefulness that took over the stable the night Jesus was born."

Is Jesus calling you to peace? Explain.

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## DAY 6 MEDITATION: JOHN 6:33-35

"I have learned that Jesus needs no special place to fit in. He fits in wherever there is hunger. I thought I knew all about hunger and even had the answer because I housed food. But the food Jesus gives, gives life and eliminates hunger."

What do you hunger for? Write it down and prayerfully submit your request to the bread of life.

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## DAY 7 MEDITATION: ISAIAH 40:4

"I am encouraged by the thought, the lowly places shall be exalted and the crooked places made straight. I come from a lowly place and know what it means to be lifted up. Jesus lifted me up and thought it not too much to fill me up and give me a new purpose."

Has Jesus filled you up? Do you now have a new purpose? Explain...

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## DAY 8 MEDITATION: ZEPHANIAH 3:17

"I learned when Jesus was placed inside me that he is the image of hope. Life before Jesus was uneventful. I had no expectation of abundant life. It was like when animals came to me to be fed, yet were surprised when they received food. I now know that I can't possibly imagine the goodness that comes through Jesus."

Has Jesus surprised you lately? Share that event in this space.

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# Daily Conversations with "Manger"

## DAY 9 MEDITATION: ISAIAH 60:1

"Often the barn where I live seemed dark and sort of lifeless. There was no reason to look around, everything was always the same. But when Jesus came there was light that no darkness could put out."

Write a prayer submitting the dark places of your life to Jesus.

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## DAY 10 MEDITATION: MATTHEW 1:24-25

"I learned that Joseph was reluctant to follow the instructions he had been given by the angel. However, beyond his reluctance, he made the decision to obey the message of the angel. It is more important to follow God's message than rely on your feelings."

What is God urging you to do that you have avoided doing? Explore your reasons for reluctance.

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## DAY 11 MEDITATION: MATTHEW 2:2

"Now I find myself looking for Jesus in everything I do. It is actually a form of my worship of him. To see Jesus all the time is to give him the attention he deserves."

What is your worship profile? Write about it in this space.

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## DAY 12 MEDITATION: ISAIAH 2:4

I am in awe of the peace Jesus gives. When his peace takes over, discord is resolved and there is no need to fight because of differences. I have become more willing to acknowledge my limitations with the peace of knowing that Jesus takes little and makes much. Just look at what happened to this stable in the back of an inn, it became a historical landmark because Jesus came."

Share what change Jesus has made with regards to any personal limitation you might have.

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# Daily Conversations with "Manger"

## DAY 13 MEDITATION: ISAIAH 9:2

"I am amazed as I think of the many names Jesus is called. It seems his name is a story in itself. I can attest to that because when I call his name, he is my everything. The protection in that name is beyond total comprehension. I shall call on his name as often as I can."

Write Isaiah 9:2 using words that you think about when you call the name Jesus.

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## DAY 14 MEDITATION: MATTHEW 1:21

"I am so glad that Jesus came to me and looked beyond my hard surface and rigid structure. Jesus looked at me as worthy to be used and I am eternally grateful."

Use the space below to express your thankfulness for Jesus choosing you and saving you from your sins.

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## DAY 15 - 24

The advent entries for the last two weeks will be activities to share with family and friends. You will have ten activities to choose from. There is no order of which one you may choose for any given day. Feel free to add your own activity. The only requirement for the last ten days of advent is that you commit to doing an activity each day and honoring Jesus in preparation to celebrate His birth.

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## (1) Find the facts and Fill in the blanks

Mary was \_\_\_\_\_ years old when Jesus was born.

Jesus was born in a town called \_\_\_\_\_.

A \_\_\_\_\_ told Mary and Joseph not to be afraid.

When the wise men saw Jesus he was \_\_\_\_\_ old.

When the wise men saw Jesus, they fell down and \_\_\_\_\_ him.

## (2) Try this easy recipe

### DROP SUGAR COOKIES

2 cups of cake flour

1 ¼ teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

2/3 cup butter

¾ cup sugar

1 egg

¼ teaspoon lemon extract

1/3 cup milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Sift flour with baking powder and salt. Cream butter and gradually add sugar beating until light and fluffy. Add extracts. Add flour mixture, alternately with milk, beating after each addition until smooth. Drop from a teaspoon onto baking sheets. Sprinkle with colored sugar. Bake at 375 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes. Makes 4 dozen.

## (3) Advent word search puzzle.

S	B	C	V	C	A	D	V	E	N	T	G
H	N	A	C	A	R	O	L	S	Z	Z	U
A	N	R	B	A	X	G	I	F	T	S	R
P	I	D	U	E	L	S	Q	V	B	C	D
P	S	S	D	D	L	E	A	U	M	V	E
I	C	T	K	L	U	L	N	N	Y	E	C
N	C	O	O	K	I	E	S	D	T	H	A
G	C	O	O	K	I	N	G	M	A	A	R
X	Y	L	I	G	H	T	S	M	V	R	A
F	R	I	E	N	D	S	Y	Q	L	X	T
S	N	O	W	M	A	N	T	R	E	E	E
H	I	C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S	H

ADVENT

DECORATE

COOKIES

TREE

CHRISTMAS

CARDS

FRIENDS

LIGHTS

GIFTS

SHOPPING

SNOWMAN

BELLS

CALENDAR

COOKING

SANTA

CAROLS

## (4) Cheese Drop Biscuits

2 cups cake flour  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
½ teaspoon salt

1 cup grated American cheese  
4 tablespoons butter  
1 cup milk

Sift flour, baking powder, salt and sift a second time. Cut in cheese and butter. Add milk gradually, stirring until soft dough is formed. Drop from a teaspoon on non-greased baking sheet. Bake at 450 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes. Makes 18 biscuits. These biscuits are especially suitable with soups, salads and even fruit.

## (5) Fact Find

What is the name of the king in power of the region where Jesus was born ?

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What is the name of the relative Mary visits during her pregnancy ?

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How did the shepherds find baby Jesus ?

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How does Anna bear witness to Jesus being the redeemer ?

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What does Simeon praise God for when he comes in contact with Jesus ?

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## (6) Build a Manger Scene

Purchase a manger scene with moveable pieces. Distribute one figure to each person in your home. Each person is responsible to talk about their figure when you reassemble the manger scene together. Some families choose to assemble figures one at a time all during the week or on one day. All are responsible for any of the pieces that were not taken.

## (7) Plant

Purchase paper white bulbs or narcissus bulbs in a clay pot filled with rich soil. Set it near a sunny window. During advent watch the shoots emerge. Soon delicate white flowers will bloom and fill the room with a sweet fragrance, a reminder of God's promise to make all things new in Christ Jesus.

## (8) Luminaria

Here is a way to welcome people to your home. Fill small paper bags with sand or dirt. Set in each bag a candle or votive. Place them outside on your steps or porch. The candles can be lighted each night leading up to Christmas or only on Christmas eve as you welcome the birth of baby Jesus.

## (9) Special gifts

Draw names in your household. You are now responsible to commit acts of kindness the week leading up to Christmas. It is important that these acts be anonymous. On Christmas day reveal yourself to your family member.

## (10) Boxing day

Each person in your household is to prepare a box of treats. First wrap your box, a shoe box is perfect. Place cheese crackers and peanut butter crackers, cookies, etc. in the box. Go as a family to an area where the homeless usually hangout and distribute them to persons in this area. Your gift will bless someone.



Merry Christmas!  
2019


A Christmas Prayer

Lord God,  
May your word become flesh in our lives  
So that others may see him in our love for each other,  
Our service to the needy, and or care for the little ones of this earth.

Amen  
*Anonymous*



A Prayer for the Table



With the shepherds and angels, we sing:  
Glory to God and peace to all people on earth.  
With Mary and Joseph we praise you, O God,  
For Christ, the word made flesh,  
With joyful hearts we offer you thanks  
For the gifts that grace this table.  
Strengthen us with this food  
That we may be witnesses to the light shining in darkness.  
We ask this in the name of our Savior, Christ the lord.

Amen  
*Anonymous*

Love,  
Your Kids Street Family

