

Purpose

- To learn more about Advent
- Learn about the Twelve Days of Christmas

Materials

- Bibles
- Handouts

Background Information**ADVENT**

We here at South Side have a tradition each year. The CWF (Christian Women's Fellowship) called Circle of Friends sell lights for the Lights of Love project. An artificial tree has been placed in the narthex. People have purchased light for the tree in honor or memory of someone. On a Wednesday evening we will have a short lighting ceremony and light the tree for the first time. It will be lighted during the entire Advent season.

Our entire church is decorated for Christmas on the Saturday before the first Sunday of Advent. This is called the Hanging of the Greens. The Worship committee is in charge of this and they do a wonderful job each year. Look all around and see what decorating they have done.

On a Sunday we will have our Family Christmas Celebration. We get together to eat, sing and enjoy the Advent season with our entire congregation. This year we are having a carry-in immediately after the Worship service. Be sure and come with your family if Covid allows.

Another tradition that we have is our Christmas program. Some years it is a cantata done by our choir. However this year we are doing things a little different. Some of the children will probably be presenting a short play about the birth of Jesus. This is on Sunday during the church service. I hope some of you are participating in this, but if you are not, be sure and come see all of your friends, Next year maybe you will want to participate.

Last lesson we talked about and looked at the Chrisman decorations that are on our Chrisman tree up on the chancel. Chrisman refers to our Lord and Savior. The word Chrisman comes from two words: CHRIST and MONogram. A Chrisman is a monogram of Christ. Our tree contains various combinations of the monograms, symbols and crosses listed last week. All of the Chrismons used to decorate the tree are in white and gold to symbolize the purity and perfection, the majesty and glory of the Son of God. May these symbols continually remind you of God's greatest gift to us all, Jesus Christ.

Please note that there are several kinds of crosses. The cross is always a reminder of our Lord's saving work of redeeming mankind through His sacrifice for our

sins, thereby bringing forgiveness and salvation. Different forms of the cross may point to various aspects of our Christ's life and work.

Here is another good advent story:

TWO BABIES IN A MANGER

In 1994, two Americans answered an invitation from the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics (based on biblical principles) in the public schools. They were invited to teach at prisons, businesses, the fire and police departments and a large orphanage. About 100 boys and girls who had been abandoned, abused, and left in the care of a government-run program were in the orphanage. They related the following story in their own words:

It was nearing the holiday season, 1994, time for our orphans to hear, for the first time, the traditional story of Christmas. We told them about Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem. Finding no room in the inn, the couple went to a stable, where the baby Jesus was born and placed in a manger.

Throughout the story, the children and orphanage staff sat in amazement as they listened. Some sat on the edges of their stools, trying to grasp every word. Completing the story, they gave the children three small pieces of cardboard to make a crude manger. Each child was given a small paper square, cut from yellow napkins. No colored paper was available in the city.

Following instructions, the children tore the paper and carefully laid strips in the manger for straw. Small squares of flannel, cut from a worn-out nightgown an American lady was throwing away as she left Russia, were used for the baby's blanket. A doll-like baby was cut from tan felt we had brought from the United States.

The orphans were busy assembling their manger as they walked among them to see if they needed any help. All went well until one table where little Misha sat. He looked to be about 6 years old and had finished his project. As they looked at the little boy's manger, they were startled to see not one, but two babies in the manger. Quickly, they called for the translator to ask the lad why there were two babies in the manger.

Crossing his arms in front of him and looking at this completed manger scene, the child began to repeat the story very seriously. For such a young boy, who had only heard the Christmas story once, he related the happenings accurately – until he came to the part where Mary put the baby Jesus in the manger. Then Misha started to ad-lib. He made up his own ending to the story as he said, "And when Maria laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him I have no mamma and I have no papa, so I don't have any place to stay. Then Jesus told me I could stay with him. But I told him I couldn't, because I didn't have a gift to give him like everybody else did. But I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift. I thought maybe if I keep him warm, that would be a good gift.

So I asked Jesus, "If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?" And Jesus told me, "If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave

me.” “So I got into the manger, and then Jesus looked at me and he told me I could stay with him-for always.”

As little Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed full of tears that splashed down his little cheeks. Putting his hand over his face, his head dropped to the table and his shoulders shook as he sobbed and sobbed.

The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon nor abuse him, someone who would stay with him-FOR ALWAYS. I’ve learned that it’s not what you have in your life, but whom you have in your life that counts.

TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

This is a very interesting story that Rev. Adams told us several years ago on Christmas. Read this and enjoy.

Procedure

- Read the Advent traditions at South Side that is in the background information.
- Pull out the Chrisman symbols and explanations. Go over some of them again. If you did not go look at the Chrisman tree or the other decorations, please check them out on the tree.
- Enjoy the TWO BABIES IN A MANGER from the background information. I think you will like this.
- Read handout 54-1 on 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS. Please go over it and be sure that you understand why this was necessary because of the question about their safety.