

Reshape, Reclaim, Remember

What would it mean to reshape and reclaim the Advent season from the current commercialized chaos it has become? As we enter this Advent season, let us remember the why, let us reclaim the who, and let us reshape the how, dismantling the current constructs that have shifted our focus from Love entering the world.

Focus scripture: Isaiah 64:1–9

Just as we seek to reshape, reclaim, and remember in this season of preparation, the context of this passage from the book of Isaiah is defined by the turmoil and angst between a returning exiled people and of those who were not resettled during the Babylonian exile. As one group holds to what has always been, those who were exiled come with a different perspective on who they are as the people of God. Both groups remembering. Both groups trying desperately to reclaim what was lost during the exile. Both groups reshaping who they are as the people of God together. All the while, the prophet cries out as one voice for both groups who look for God to break open the heavens and be revealed. As the prophet laments and calls the people to confession, before the declaration of Creator and created, so should we look to confess our brokenness and reclaim some imagination in who God is reshaping and moulding us to become.

Our “re-” language continues in **Psalm 80:1–7, 17–19** as an outright plea for restoration. A people in turmoil cling to the hope that comes from the promise of God defined in the covenantal relationship between the people of Israel and God. The hope that the one to come will restore the people and bring about wholeness and healing is evident in the language of the psalm and the recurring refrain, “Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.”

1 Corinthians 1:3–9 Beginning with thanksgiving, Paul relays his deep and abiding understanding that all gifts come from God

and God alone. These gifts strengthen us in our discipleship of Jesus Christ, even to the very end. “So that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 7) speaks to the waiting in which we all participate. It speaks to the equity of gifts God has given, and to the equity of power those gifts have. For a church that was somewhat cliquish, this introduction expresses the great need to live with one another in this waiting in such a way that we might be blameless on the day the Messiah is revealed again. In a world that is so divided, perhaps this is a message for us today to consider the decisions we make and the way we treat others as we look to participate in the reconciling love of God.

Mark 13:34–37 also has a focus on our actions. How do we live out our call as disciples of Christ? The servants carry on the business of the master’s house as they wait for the master to return. As we wait in anticipation, we are invited to reflect on how we take on the business of Christ into the world.

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What does it mean to reshape, reclaim, and remember during this Advent season? As with the people of this week’s texts from the Hebrew scriptures, we too are in a world in angst and turmoil, trying to understand who God is calling us to be. The epistle and gospel readings tell us to wait in heightened anticipation. How might our waiting be active in reshaping, reclaiming, and remembering this Advent?



Focus scripture Isaiah 64:1–9

Additional scriptures
Psalm 80:1–7, 17–19
1 Corinthians 1:3–9
Mark 13:24–37

God of creation,
even in our
misguided
attempts to
worship and
praise you, you
hold us as your
people. In this
Season of Advent,
as we ready
ourselves to
usher in the Christ
child, grant us the
stillness necessary
to reflect on your
faithfulness.
Amen.

Lesson Connection

links current events with
this week’s scriptures. Go
to www.seasonsonline.ca
and click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 3–5

Waiting is a concept that young children often know well: they wait for things like treats or for an older sibling to return home from school. But their understanding of waiting is more immediate and short-term. The emphasis of the whole Advent season is on waiting and leaders need to be cautious about making assumptions with the children based on an adult experience of time. Rituals that build over the weeks of Advent both at home and in church, such as “lighting” the candles of an Advent wreath and counting days in an Advent calendar will help young children experience the “waiting” and expectation of this season.

Information for these rituals can be found on the extra resource sheets “[Advent Resources](#)” (p. 77) and “[Advent Calendar Faces](#)” (p. 78). Pray that the children will be open to the wonder and mystery of waiting for Jesus’ birth as you begin a new church year together.

Please note that the Nativity story will be explored in the December 20 session. If you will not be meeting together on December 20, plan when you will share this session with the children.

Prepare

Before the session

- ☐ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, Isaiah 64:1–9, and [biblical background material](#) (p. 3).
- ☐ Review “[About this Season of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany](#)” (p. 1) and “[This Season of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany for Ages 3–5](#)” (p. 2).
- ☐ Bring items for worship area: purple or blue cloth, offering basket, Bible with a bookmark placed in the book of Isaiah.
- ☐ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), resource sheet “[Additional Songs](#)” (p. 76) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Songbook*, *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Music CD*, and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available for purchase at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ☐ Bring Christmas picture books and a basket of unbreakable Christmas items (tree ornaments, cards, bells, wrapping paper, stars, biscuit/cookie cutters).
- ☐ Bring a large sheet of poster board (dark blue, if possible) with a few construction paper stars already attached (see resource sheet “[Patterns](#),” p. 80). Bring extra

construction paper stars, one for each child and extras for visitors.

- ☐ Make an Advent wreath (see “[Advent Resources](#)” on p. 77 for ideas).
- ☐ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).

Engage

- ☐ Bring resource sheet “[God is Very Near](#).”

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the materials.

- ☐ **Body messages:** large sheets of paper or mural paper, ribbon
- ☐ **Bell messengers:** small clay pots, pipe cleaners, 2–3 jingle bells per child, self-adhesive stickers
- ☐ **Advent calendar:** copies of this week’s resource sheet “[Advent Calendar](#)” and resource sheet “[Advent Calendar Faces](#)” (p. 78), construction paper; option: prepare a sample calendar.

Bless

- ☐ Bring a bell.
- ☐ Option: bring song “May You Find Peace” (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ☐ Copies of “[Letter to Families](#)” (p. 75)



Reshape, Reclaim, Remember

Scripture

Isaiah 64:1–9

FOCUS To hear a message of hope from the prophet Isaiah

Gather

Welcome each child, saying “Hello, *(child’s name)*, we’re happy you’re here.” Invite children to look through the books and basket of Christmas items. Explain that this is a special time of year called Advent, when we wait to celebrate baby Jesus being born at Christmas.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship table. Invite a child to help spread the blue or purple cloth and place the Bible on the table. Explain that one way that we can wait is by reading stories in the Bible about God’s love. Receive the offering.

Pray Loving God,
we wait in hope
to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Amen.

Poster ritual Invite children to look at the poster board with stars and comment on what they notice. What time of day is it if you can see stars in the sky? What do stars do? Distribute construction paper stars and use a glue stick to help the children add their stars around the edges of the poster. Explain that each week we will add more stars as we wait to celebrate baby Jesus’ birth.

Sing “We Are Waiting” (on resource sheet [Additional Songs](#), p. 76)

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

- ❑ **Puppet conversation** (*have the Advent wreath nearby*)

Priscilla: Hello, everyone! I heard it was the beginning of Advent and I brought an Advent wreath. (*Invite one child to place the wreath in the worship space.*)

Leader: That was a good idea! An Advent wreath can help us wait for Christmas.

Priscilla: Sometimes it is **so** hard to wait. How do you feel when you have to wait for something? (*Encourage responses.*)

Leader: To help us wait for Christmas, we will add a flame to one candle on this wreath each week. (*Ask a child to “light” the candle by gently pulling up the yellow tissue inside one candle.*)

Priscilla: This first candle is for hope because the promise of Jesus’ birth brought hope to people’s hearts.

Leader: That’s right. And when you come next week, Priscilla, we will light the second candle. (*Say goodbye to Priscilla.*)

- ❑ **Advent wreath** Invite children to gather around the wreath. Talk about each part of the wreath (see information on p. 77) and how lighting one candle each week can help us wait for Christmas. Invite a child to “light” the first candle by gently pulling up the yellow tissue inside one candle. Explain that this candle is for hope because the promise of Jesus’ birth brought hope to people’s hearts.

Engage

Before the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Isaiah. Mention that during Advent we think about people who lived long ago and were waiting and hoping for someone special to come and help them to change the world. Sometimes they lost their hope that the world could be a better place. Then people called “prophets” helped them to find their hope again. Today’s story is about a prophet named Isaiah. Use the resource sheet [“God is Very Near”](#) to present the story.

After the story

Mention that the people in the story were waiting for God to help them bring peace to everyone.

Right now we are waiting, and getting ready to celebrate Jesus’ birthday. What can we do while we wait to celebrate Jesus’ birth? Invite the children to repeat each sentence after you, “We watch. We wait. And soon we will celebrate.”

Activity Explain that while we wait for Christmas, our families will be getting ready. Place the basket of Christmas items in the middle of the group and invite children to take turns choosing an item. Encourage children to talk about what could be done with each item (such as, sharing love by sending a card). Continue until everyone has had a turn.

Sing “God is With Us” (on resource sheet [Additional Songs](#), p. 76)

Respond

Choose from the following activities:

☐ **Body messages** One way we can prepare for Jesus’ birth is to send messages of love. Trace children’s body outlines on mural paper and invite them to draw facial features and clothes. As they do this, ask them what messages of God’s love they would like to send to friends and families far away. Print these on their papers, roll them up, and tie with ribbons. Encourage families to send these messages.



☐ **Bell messengers** Just like Isaiah, children can also bring messages of love. Give each child a clay pot to decorate with self-adhesive stickers. Help them each thread several small bells onto a pipe cleaner; fold ends of pipe cleaner up with bells in the middle and thread the ends of the

pipe cleaner through the hole in the bottom of the pot so bells are inside; twist ends together to form a loop outside. Practice using the “bells” to announce God’s love.

☐ **Advent calendar** Invite children to prepare a calendar to use during Advent showing different people waiting to celebrate Jesus’ birth. Help them glue a manger shape into the middle of their construction papers and cut out the face for December 3 (from [“Advent Calendar Faces,”](#) p. 78) to glue in the top left corner. Explain that they will add another face each day and when all the faces are glued on, it will be Christmas. Give a set of face pictures and the instruction letter to the parents.

Bless

Gather in the worship space and invite children to take turns ringing a bell as the group says, “God is near!”

Pray Thank you, God, for being with us while we wait for Christmas. Amen.

Sing if possible, “May You Find Peace” (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

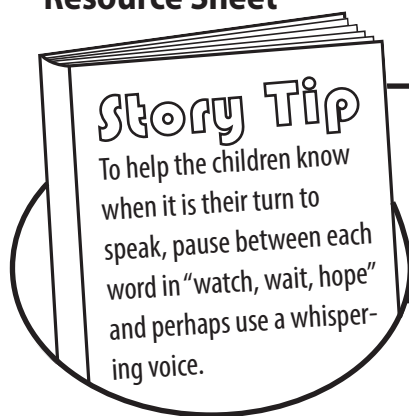
Send each child out with the words “(child’s name), God’s love and hope is with you.”

Distribute copies of the [“Letter to Families”](#) (p. 75) to take home.

Reflect

In what ways has this week’s session helped create for the children a feeling of waiting and anticipating?





God Is Very Near

(based on Isaiah 64:1–9)

(Invite the children to listen for the phrase “watch, wait, hope” in the story; whenever they hear it have them whisper, “God is very near.”)

Long ago in the country of Judah, there was a man whose name was Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet. God would speak to Isaiah and then Isaiah would speak God’s words to the people. Isaiah was like God’s messenger. Many times he would tell the people, **“watch, wait, hope.”**

Children say: **God is very near.**

But the people were very frightened and sad. They were living in scary times. The countries around them were fighting with one another. Their places of worship and their homes were being ruined. People were stealing from each other. People were hurting each other. They began to think that God had stopped caring for them. Still, the prophet Isaiah would tell the people, **“watch, wait, hope.”**

Children say: **God is very near.**

“Don’t give up hope,” Isaiah would say. “God loves you and is with you. Keep watching and waiting. Keep on hoping. Keep on talking to me.” And again Isaiah would say, **“watch, wait, hope.”**

Children say: **God is very near.**

“But what shall we do while we wait?” the people asked. “Keep on loving God. Worship God always,” Isaiah replied, “and love and care for others.” And then Isaiah would say again, **“watch, wait, hope.”**

Children say: **God is very near.**

The people thought, “Our life may be bad now, but it will get better. God loves us and cares for us.” And so the people believed Isaiah’s message. They waited and hoped for peace. They waited and hoped for the time when they would feel happy and full of joy again. And always, always, they remembered **“watch, wait, hope.”**

Children say: **God is very near.**

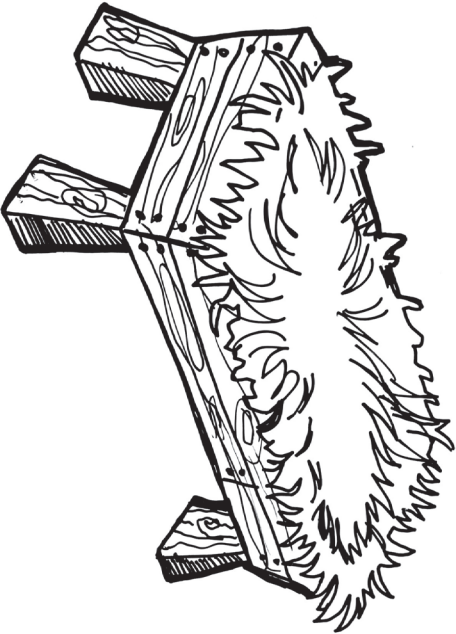
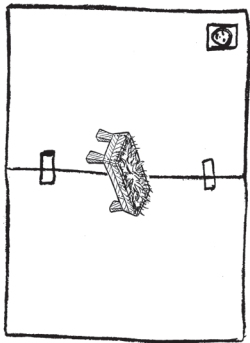


Advent Calendar

To make an Advent calendar:

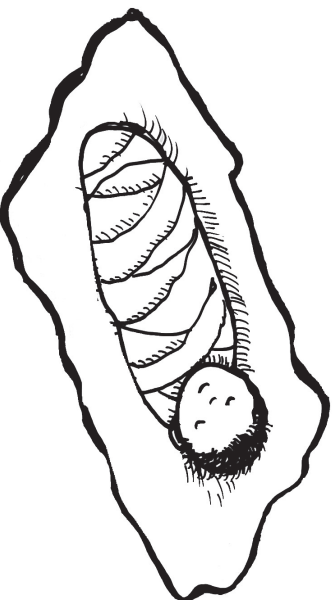
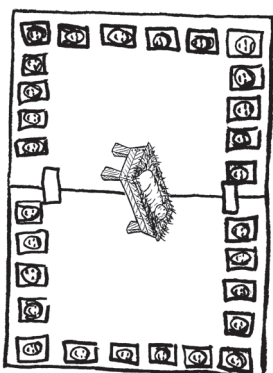
Instructions:

- Make copies of this page; cut out an empty manger and a copy of the letter for each child.
- Make copies of the resource sheet "Advent Calendar Faces" (p. 78) and trim the edges from the sheet.
- Cut out the face for November 30, one for each child.
- Tape together two sheets of construction paper (see illustration).



Dear Parent,

Please help your child cut out and glue one face onto their Advent calendar each day during Advent. Mention to them that when all the faces are glued around the manger, it will be time to celebrate Jesus' birthday. On Christmas Day help them to glue baby Jesus (below) in the manger and say a prayer together to thank God for the love that Jesus brings to us.



Letter to Families



Dear Families,

Welcome to the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany! We are looking forward to exploring these seasons and their scripture readings together with the children. We recognize that this is probably a very busy time for your family but we hope that you and your children will be able to take some time to experience the religious significance of these seasons. In order to help you, we have provided resources for Advent Calendar, with Advent Calendar faces, that you and your children can use to mark the days until Christmas.

During Advent, the group will be exploring readings from the prophet Isaiah and the Psalms, and the story of Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel in the first chapter of Luke. These readings will help us reflect on the themes of longing, comfort, and hope.

During the weeks of the Season after the Epiphany (referred to as "ordinary time" in the church year), most of the focus scripture readings come from the gospel of Mark. Children will have an opportunity to explore stories of Jesus' baptism, the call of the fishers, and the beginning of his ministry. The stories of healing and teaching will help children learn more about who Jesus is and discover the ways in which they too can share God's light and love in the world.

On February 14, the last Sunday of the season, we celebrate the story of Jesus' Transfiguration and the importance of listening to Jesus.

During these seasons we will be praying for each child in our group and we ask that your family also include us in your prayers. You are welcome to visit our meeting area any time. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions about the church school program, please feel free to contact us. We are always happy to hear what is working well and what could be changed.

Sincerely,

Suggested resources: The *Family Story Bible* and *Family Story Bible Colouring Book*, illustrated by Margaret Kyle, or *The Lectionary Story Bible, Year B*. For older children, *Read, Wonder, Listen: Stories from the Bible for Young Readers*. All are available from the publisher of *Seasons of the Spirit* at www.woodlakebooks.com.



Additional Songs

We Are Waiting

(tune: "Frère Jacques" or "Are You Sleeping?")

We are waiting, we are waiting,
every day, every day,
to celebrate a birthday,
to celebrate a birthday,
Jesus' birth! Jesus' birth!

Ring the Bells

(tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Ring, ring, ring the bells.
Ring the bells today.
Jesus comes to share God's love.
Ring the bells today.

God Is With Us

(tune: "Frère Jacques" or "Are You Sleeping?")

God is with us, God is with us,
all the time, all the time,
comforting and loving,
comforting and loving,
Thank you, God. Thank you, God.

If You're Happy and You Know It

The musical notation is in 4/4 time, key of F major. It consists of four staves of music. The lyrics and actions are as follows:

Staff 1: If you're hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. stamp your feet. snap your fingers. If you're

Staff 2: hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. stamp your feet. snap your fingers. If you're

Staff 3: hap - py and you know it, then your face will sure-ly show it. If you're

Staff 4: hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. stamp your feet. snap your fingers.

Other verses:

If you're sad and you know it, cry boo hoo.
If you're tired and you know it, give a yawn.
If you're angry and you know it, stamp your foot.
If you're excited and you know it, give a jump.
If you're loving and you know it, throw a kiss.

God Loves Us

(tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

We are all God's family. (Open arms wide.)
Look around and you will see.
(Shade eyes with one hand and look around.)
God loves you and God loves me.
(Place hands over heart.)
We are all God's family. (Open arms wide.)
Look around and you will know.
(Shade eyes with one hand and look around.)
God's love helps us all to grow.
(Bring arms up and hold hands above head.)

We Will Follow Jesus

(tune: "The Bear Went Over the Mountain")

We will follow Jesus
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Je-sus
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Je-sus
and do what Jesus did.



Advent Resources

Advent Wreaths

Traditionally, the Advent wreath is a circle of evergreens, the round shape symbolizing the unending love of God and the evergreens symbolizing the hope for eternal life shared by all God's people. There are four coloured candles (either four blue or three purple and one pink), which represent the four weeks of Advent, and one white candle in the middle. The lighting of an Advent candle each week marks the growing excitement and anticipation of Jesus' birth and the white Christ candle is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to celebrate Jesus' birth.

Wreath #1

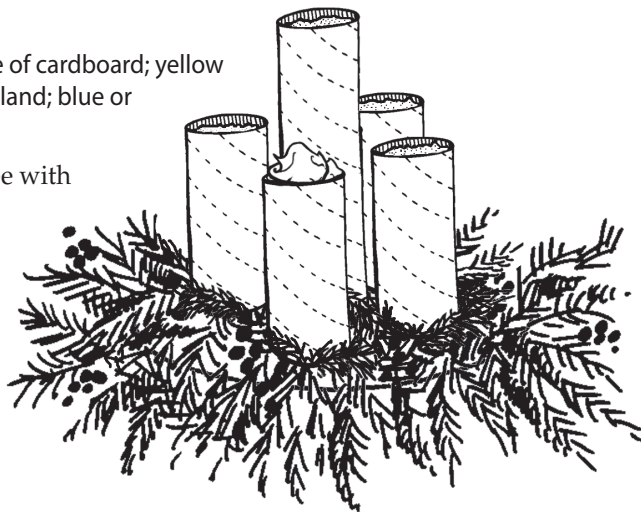
Materials: 15 cm/6 in Styrofoam circle; 4 small paper rolls or tubes; 1 paper towel roll cut down so it is slightly taller than the other tubes; yellow tissue paper; blue or purple paint; pink and white paint, greens (fresh, artificial or paper); gold glitter; low temperature glue; diluted white glue

Paint four tubes blue, or three purple and one tube pink, and the paper towel tube white. Press the paper towel tube into the middle of the Styrofoam circle. Position the four other tubes around the larger tube. (Push enough to put markings in the circle.) Remove the tubes and then use a low temperature glue to secure them in the Styrofoam. Cut yellow tissue paper into squares, brush them lightly with glue and sprinkle them with gold glitter. When dry, place the tissue paper inside the "candles" to be pulled up by the children. Decorate the base with artificial or fresh greens.

Wreath #2

Materials: 5 small paper rolls or tubes; 30 cm/12 in circle of cardboard; yellow and orange tissue paper; 60 cm/2 ft piece of artificial garland; blue or purple, pink, white and green paper; hot glue

Cover three tubes with blue or purple paper, one tube with pink and one with white. Cover the cardboard circle green. Cut slits around the bottom of each tube, about 1/2 in. up, and hot-glue onto the green base so that the "candles" stand up. Glue artificial garland around the base. Gently insert several squares of orange and yellow tissue paper into each "candle." (Twist the squares together first so they will stay together.) Each week a child can reach into the tube and pull up a flame.



Sock Doll (baby Jesus)

(Dec 20)

- Fill a small sock with stuffing almost to the top.
- Secure a rubber band around the top of the sock (illus. #1).
- Cut out a 5 cm/2 in circle from felt and draw a simple baby face on it with a fine-line permanent marker.
- Glue felt face below the rubber band (illus. #2).
- Fold top of sock down to make a cap (illus. #3).



Illus. #1




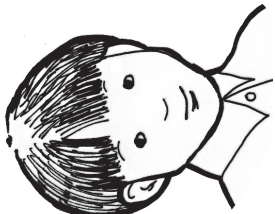

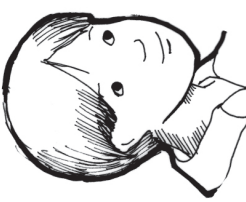
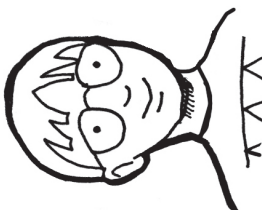


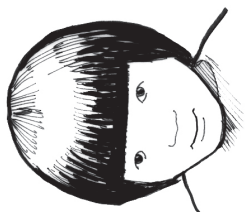
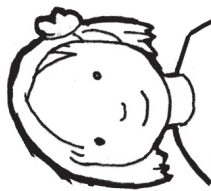








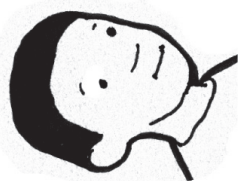
Illus. #2



Illus. #3

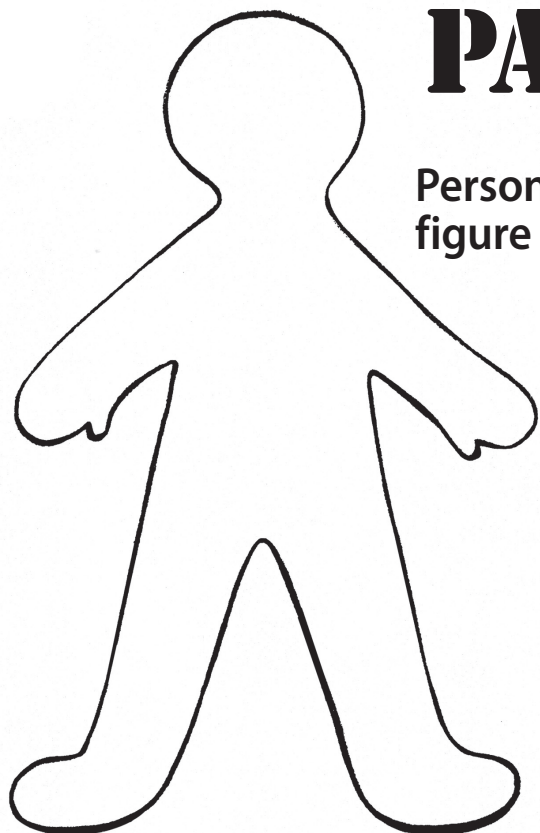


Advent Calendar Faces

	December 5		December 12		December 19		
	December 4		December 11		December 18		
	December 3		December 10		December 17		December 24
	December 2		December 9		December 16		December 23
	December 1		December 8		December 15		December 22
	November 30		December 7		December 14		December 21
	November 29		December 6		December 13		December 20



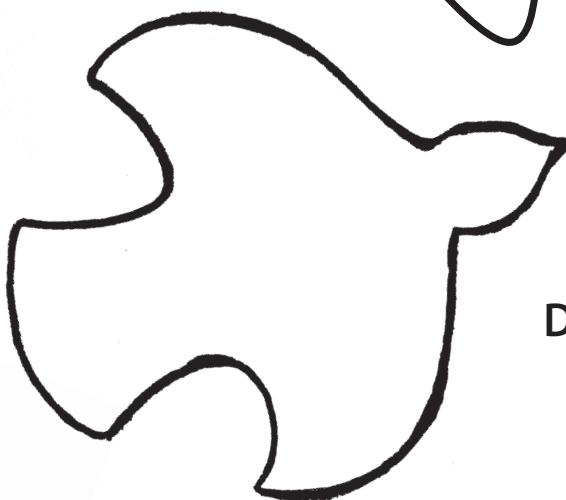
PATTERNS



Person
figure



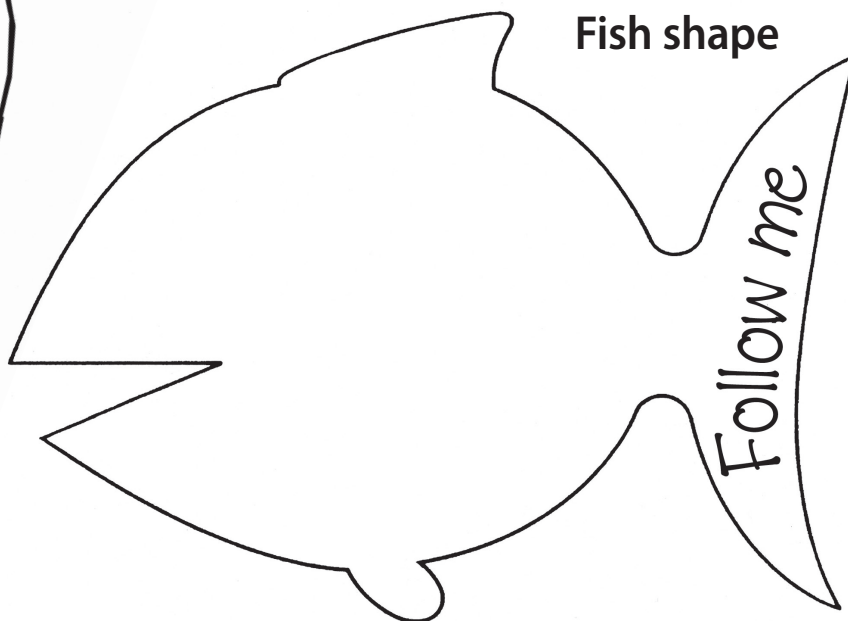
Star shape



Dove shape



Footprint shape



Fish shape

