United Intergenerational Ministry
Worship Leader’s Guide - Advent I

Advent Christmas Series: “God’s Love Comes Down”
Scripture Base: 1 Chronicles 16:8-10; Hebrews 13:15; John 6:33; and John 15:12-13
Complements UIM SS Series 49 “Building Kinder, Gentler Generations”

“God’s Love to the End - Jesus”

Based on: John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end [to the fullest degree, extremely, revealing His heart].

Objective: To help generations understand the depth of and thank God for the full extent of His love - Jesus, who loved us to the end so we can share His love to lead others to Him.

Preparations:
• For a copy-ready Worship Bulletin: Print the bulletin from the Adobe (.pdf ) file provided.Copy the cover and back page back to back with pages one and four. Fold it in half to make your bulletin. Copy pages two and three back to back and cut in half to make a half page insert. Make as many copies as you need.
• For a Tailored Bulletin You also have permission of cut and paste from the Adobe file provided to tailor your bulletin to your needs.
• For the Interactive Lesson: Cut up about 10-20 small pieces of paper and write the word “Love” on each piece. Then, place each piece into a Bible randomly on different pages.
• For the Advent Devotion Calendar: Reproduce one copy of the complete Advent Christmas Devotion Calendar for each family in your congregation or reproduce a single calendar page for each week.
• For the Craft: Make craft instructions and supplies available as you desire.

Opening Hymn of Thanks: To include children, alert the congregation to sing and have the organist replay the last phrase of each verse specifically so that children can sing it. Encourage those sitting near children to point to the last phrase so they can listen for it and repeat it. Adding this repetition can also allow others with sight or learning challenges to participate. Encourage those with any challenges that keep them from singing this hymn to listen to the words and those with hearing challenges to read the words of this hymn as it is sung so all can be blessed by the message.

“Now Thank We All Our God ” LSB 895/ TLH 36/ LW 443

Invocation  Can be read in a traditional style responsively.  To include children and those with sight or reading challenges, ask them to repeat the responses. This kind of repetition increases participation of all generations and helps children enjoy worship and be enjoyed in worship. Words are printed for the hearing impaired, but with their permission, point to the words of the refrain so they will know with what words and when they should respond to help them participate.

* Denotes words children and visually challenged may repeat.

Leader: We begin in the name of God our Father, who loved us so much He gave us His only Son.
Response: We thank You, Father*
Leader: We begin in the name of God the Son, who loved His Father so much He came to earth to save us.
Response: We thank You, Son *
Leader: We begin in the name of God the Holy Spirit, who displays and proves God’s great love for us by continuing to sanctify and keep us in saving faith.
Response: We thank You, Holy Spirit *
Leader: In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,
Response: Let everything that has breath praise You, Lord!*

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A Psalm of Thanks:  Adapted from Psalm 136:1-4
The worship leader should read the verses. After each verse, generations may say the response of generations. To include children, practice the response ahead of time. UIM worship provides shorter lines and repetition to help children and every age and situation that can benefit from these to participate. Words are printed for those with hearing challenges, but with their permission, invite those sitting near them to point to the words of the response when it should be said to help them participate.

Response of Generations:  God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Verse 1:  Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.  
Response

Verse 2:  Give thanks to the God of gods.  
Response

Verse 3:  Give thanks to the Lord of lords.  
Response

Verse 4:  Give thanks to Him who alone does great wonders.  
Response

Confession:  To read responsively, generations may respond to the leader in unison. UIM worship provides shorter lines you may practice with children and every age and situation to help them participate. To specifically include children, ask those around them to cue them when to and help them to respond. Words are printed for those with hearing challenges, but with their permission, invite those sitting near them to point to the words of the response when it should be said to help them participate.

Response of Generations:  Out of Your steadfast love, forgive us, O Lord.

Petition:  Lord, we do not always give You thanks for the good things You give us every day.  
Response

Petition:  Father, we do not always remember that You are God of gods.  
Response

Petition:  Jesus, we do not always honor You as Lord of lords.  
Response

Petition:  We do not always thank You, O God, for giving us the full extent of Your love.  
Response

Absolution:  If this absolution is being spoken by someone other than a pastor, omit the last sentence in the brackets. Pastors may omit the last sentence in this absolution before the brackets.

Leader:  Our God of mercy has given us His only Son, His love come down, to be born on earth and to suffer, die, and rise again so that all of our sins can be forgiven. Jesus is the full extent of God’s love and our forgiveness and salvation. As a fellow servant of Christ the crucified and one redeemed by the full extent of His love, I declare to you that all our sins are forgiven and forgotten. [As a called and ordained servant of Christ and by His authority, I, therefore, forgive You all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.]

Leader:  And All God’s people say:  All Generations:  Amen

Options for Readings:

• Option 1: Worship Leader reads all readings.

• Option 2: Invite different generations to read the first two readings during the service. Always have the Worship Leader read the Gospel to give it reverent significance. Remember, you can help very young readers by reading words to them that they can repeat after you.

• Option 3: Invite all generations to repeat the words of the first two readings a few words at a time in unison to include all generations, especially children.

Note:  Always remind readers to state chapter and verse after every reading to teach generations where these passages are located so they can use them in their times of need.

Old Testament Reading:  1 Chronicles 16:8-9
8 Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! 9 Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; tell of all His wondrous works!
**New Testament Reading:** Hebrews 13:15
Through [Jesus] then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.

**Hymn of Praise:** To include children, alert the congregation to sing and have the organist replay the last phrase of each verse specifically so that children can sing it. Encourage those sitting near children to point to the last phrase so they can listen for it and repeat it. Adding this repetition can also allow others with sight or learning challenges to participate. Encourage those with any challenges that keep them from singing this hymn to listen to the words and those with hearing challenges to read the words of this hymn as it is sung so all can be blessed by the message.

“Let All Together Praise Our God” LSB 389/ LW 44
“Praise God the Lord, Ye Sons of Men” TLH 105

**UIM Interactive Lesson FOR ALL GENERATIONS:** “Giving God Thanks and Praise”
Based on: Old and New Testament Readings.

**You Will Need:** To cut up about 10-20 pieces of paper and write the word “Love” on each piece. Then, place each piece into a Bible randomly on different pages.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have children present, invite them to come forward to help them participate in Worship, but present this lesson even if you do not have children present. UIM Interactive Lessons are for all generations. As you present this lesson, speak to the children but bring the entire congregation into your conversation.

I. **ASK:** How can we thank and praise God? Allow time for answers; then add: Our Old Testament Reading shares that we can thank God by calling upon His name and telling everyone what He has done for us like saving us and how He cares for us each day. Our New Testament Reading shares how we can continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God by acknowledging Jesus’ name or telling everyone we believe Jesus is our Savior and that His name saves us.

II. Say: The Bible I am holding is filled with one more way we can thank and praise God. Tip it over and let the words “Love” fall out. Ask those who can read to read the word printed on each piece of paper.

III. Add: In the New Testament, Jesus gave a new command that we love one another as God has loved us (John 13:34). But the truth is, we cannot love like God. God’s love is steadfast. Our love is human and tends to only love if others love us. We will be learning additional verses of Psalm 136 that will teach us more about God’s steadfast love in this Advent Series.

IV. **If you are offering this service in conjunction with UIM SS, mention that Jesus’ love helps to build kinder, gentler generations.**

V. The remainder of this service will help us understand the depth of and thank God for the full extent of His love - Jesus, who loved us to the end. In our sermon, we will learn how Jesus loves us to the fullest degree, extremely, and how His love reveals His heart.

**(Invite those who have come forward to return to their seats.)**

**Dramatic Reading:** “Without God’s Love, We Are Nothing”
Based on 1 Corinthians 13:2. Invite children to listen as a story is told to keep them involved.

There are two options for presenting this drama:
• Ask two volunteers to practice this drama ahead of time and present the two parts as a Chancel Drama: Turn lights off to bring characters onstage. Turn lights on to present the drama. Turn lights off to exit characters. Turn lights on for the reading of the Gospel.
Reader: Why have you come here?

Generations: To worship God.

Reader: There’s more to worship than just coming.

Generations: We will worship God with our lips.

Reader: You cannot worship with your lips alone.

Generations: We will worship Him with song.

Reader: Songs must come from the heart.

Generations: We will worship with our heart.

Reader: God must be worshiped above all gods.

Generations: We may not always do that.

Reader: We must proclaim Him Lord of lords!

Generations: We may fail to do that at times.

Reader: Love does what we fail to do.

Generations: Our love for God?

Reader: More importantly, God’s love for us.

Generations: You mean Jesus.

Reader: Jesus has reconciled us to God and made worship possible.

Generations: Do you mean that without God’s love our worship means nothing?

Reader: I mean that without God’s love, we are nothing. “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:2

Gospel Reading: Ask generations to stand out of reverence (1) for words that our Lord actually said when He walked on earth or (2) for words that were said about Him. Option: For deeper effect, process with a cross to the middle of the center aisle and read the Gospel.

John 15:12-13

12 [Jesus said;] “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

Creed: Type in the page number from the hymnal for the Creed you will be using.

Communion Service: Nicene Creed (LSB back page, TLH pg. 22, LW pg. 166)

Non-Communion Service: Apostle’s Creed. (LSB back page, TLH pg 12, LW pg 167)

Sermon Hymn: To include children, invite and encourage those sitting near them to help them sing the words that are repeated at the beginning and end of each verse. This and any kind of repetition in worship can also allow others with sight or learning challenges to participate. Encourage those with any challenges that keep them from singing this hymn to listen to the words and those with hearing challenges to read the words of this hymn as it is sung and be blessed by the message.

“O Jesus So Sweet, O Jesus So Mild” LSB 546

TLH and LW can print this public domain text and tune

UIM Sermon: “Jesus Loved Us To the End!”

Based on John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end [to the fullest degree, extremely, revealing His heart].

Introduction: What is most wonderful about UIM Worship is that it can involve all generations. Explain to generations that each time they hear the worship leader say “To the fullest degree, extremely, and with His whole heart,” they should respond with the words “Jesus loved us to the end.” This response is also the title of the sermon to make it easy to remember. Always remind children to listen for the worship leader’s cue so they can respond and participate. Give those with hearing challenges printed copies of the sermon or of this outline and ask those seated near them to point to the responses so they can respond right along with everyone else! If you are uncomfortable with having worshipers respond or would like to ask for a response for some sermons and not others to add variety and meet the needs of those who may like one or the other, you may omit the response, but do try to make it part of your sermon by saying it yourself for stronger emphasis and effect.
I. I want to begin with a story: One adopted child had not been able to go to Disneyland with her first adopted family because she had misbehaved dreadfully every time they tried to take her. She had always ended up staying at home with a family friend while other siblings had gone with their parents. Eventually, the adoption was dissolved. Her new adopted family tried to take her to Disneyland too. Again, her horrible behavior had them wanting to leave her home. In a last ditch effort, the father all but screamed, “You are my daughter and a member of this family. You are coming to Disneyland!” Her behavior got worse on the trip there, but the day at Disneyland went unbelievably well. That night after prayers, the father asked his daughter if she had a good time. After a few moments, she almost whispered, “Daddy, I finally got to go to Disneyland. But it wasn’t because I was good; it’s because I’m yours.” We don’t receive God’s love because we are good. We receive His love because we are His. What we are going to learn about in this Sermon is how deep God’s love is for each one of us. Our Sermon Text tells us Jesus having loved His own... loved them to the end. We are going to learn a great deal more about what that means. The father in the story loved his adopted daughter, but in a side-bar to his story he explained that he was ready not to take her to Disneyland. This is human love. It has its limit. Yet something inside of him caused him to blurt out “You are my daughter!” That was God’s love living in him, the love with which Jesus has loved us to the end. We are going to focus on this love because we are going to need it to grow God’s Church. New members come with new ideas that can cause conflict, but God’s love can resolve and even prevent them all. This means we truly need God’s love. However, if our love for one another is going to flourish and grow in our congregation, we need to understand the depth of Jesus’ love for us. His is the kind of love that holds the key to growing into a loving person and congregation of people who truly love one another. The depth of Jesus’ love is clearly outlined for us in the words of Scripture that tell us Jesus was born in a manger. Advent and this Advent Worship Service are all about preparing to celebrate His birth. But for us to know the depth of Jesus’ love, God has given us His Holy Scriptures which do more than tell the story. Through the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures fill us with the essence of God’s love in Christ. Today, God’s Word is accessible for us to read; we can hear it in worship and study it as individuals and together in Bible Class. Unfortunately, there are also many things today that separate us from God’s Word like our work and responsibilities, our hobbies, and even sometimes our friends. Anything that keeps us from God’s Word keeps us from understanding and experiencing the depth of His love. Worse yet, of course, is the reality that not knowing His love makes it hard for us to love each other as we should or need to in order to support each other in times of need. Many problems and tragedies today happen because people are separated from the love of God they need to help them love and support each other - the love of Jesus that loves us to the end. Too many unsupported and unloved people have become filled with despair and hate. They are doing hateful things like mass killings. We need God’s love to grow His Church and the world needs God’s love to stop despair and hatred from destroying life itself. That is why it is critical for us to do as God Himself teaches us in Ephesians 5:2. “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” In the remainder of this sermon, we are going to study the love of Jesus that not only teaches but empowers us to walk in love because He has loved us

Leader: To the fullest degree, extremely, and with His whole heart;

Generations: Jesus loved us to the end.

II. Understanding the depth of His love gives us a glimpse of the flow and shape of our Lord’s heart, a heart we need to grow both His Church and His love on earth. He loved us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8) and every bit as badly behaved as the little girl in our story. The depth of His love is displayed in those who love Him because He loved them first (1 John 4:19). Their love is produced in them by His love. His love is most amazingly displayed in those who wonder how they can be loving to some very unloving people like the father in our story being surprise by the words he said because he was not feeling them. Our sinful inclination is to become disgusted and even angry with unloving people. But when the words that come out of our mouths reflect love, not our inner feelings, when His love compels us to do things we
aren’t inclined to do, we know His love lives in us. I have to wonder how may of us are thinking back right now to we weren’t inclined to do something but did it anyway. Chances are we did not recognize our actions as God’s love living in us. Prayerfully, after this sermon we will. This, of course, does not answer our questions about how we come to have His kind of love living in us? Advent every year is like a new beginning. If we have not loved as God has loved us or have not recognized His love, we get a second chance. As individuals and as a congregation, we have another opportunity to use the time God gives us to prepare our hearts and lives for His love that has come down from heaven to live in us. The more we prepare our hearts and lives to receive God’s love, the more deeply His love will come to live in us. Advent is or should be a holy, reverent time of preparation. Yet, we will constantly fight the world’s desire to make it commercial and unholy. That is why it has become the job of every Christian and every Christian congregation to help bring Advent preparation back into our own faith and lives. Then, the more our hearts and lives are filled with His love, the more we can help other lives to be filled with the same love. As this love happens, the growing pains of Church growth will not be as intense if they exist at all and neither will hatred and despair grow. Instead, people all around us will see that there truly is no greater love than God’s love in Christ, the love spoken of in our Gospel reading and that has come down because Jesus has loved us.

Leader: **To the fullest degree, extremely, and with His whole heart;**

Generations: **Jesus loved us to the end.**

III. It is easy to picture and enjoyable to prepare for the Baby Jesus in a manger. It fills us with anticipation of Christmas. It is, however, much harder to look at Jesus on the cross - but we must, for it is on the cross that we come to know the full extent of God’s love in Christ. Jeremiah the prophet tells us in Jeremiah 31:3 that the Lord appeared to him from far away and said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” He was speaking of the promised everlasting love of our Savior. This was also, however, the promise of Calvary and a gruesome death for our Savior. This fact that should prove even to the most skeptical person that God is not blind to our plight, but that He was willing to suffer with us. Compassion comes from two Latin words meaning “to suffer with.” The depth of God’s all-consuming love for mankind was demonstrated most fully on the cross where His compassion was embodied in Jesus Christ. “In Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:19 - a message of deep love and compassion. In Ephesians 2:4, Paul speaks of God as one who is “rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us.” It was the love of God that sent Jesus Christ to the cross. On top of all of this love from God, His Son, Jesus, suffered and died out of love for His Father and for all sinners - including us. It was love that enabled Jesus Christ to become poor that we through His poverty might be made rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). It was love, divine love, that made Him endure the cross despising its shame (Hebrews 12:2). It was love that made Him endure the false accusations of sinners against Him, that kept Him from defending Himself when He was falsely accused of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65), and that He did not simply call the whole thing off as He was led to Golgotha to die with common thieves (Luke 23:32-55). It was nothing but love that kept Him from calling upon His Father to send twelve legions of angels to come to rescue Him (Matthew 26:53). It was love that caused Him after every known torture devised by degenerate man had been heaped upon Him to lift His voice and pray, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). The total depth of God’s love in Christ is beautifully described in twenty-four of the most beautiful words we will ever hear recorded in John 3:16. Please say them with me: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” By offering Himself on the cross, Jesus has loved us.

Leader: **To the fullest degree, extremely, and with His whole heart;**

Generations: **Jesus loved us to the end.**

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IV. Conclude: We’ve come to the end of our sermon. It’s time to decide what the depth of Jesus love living in us means to us and to our congregation and to the whole world? When Ira Gillett, missionary to East Africa, returned home to report on his activities overseas, he related an interesting phenomenon. Repeatedly, Gillett had noticed how groups of Africans would walk past government hospitals and travel many extra miles to receive medical treatment at the missionary compound. He finally asked a particular group why they walked the extra distance when the same treatments were available at the government clinics. The reply: “The medicines may be the same but the hands are different.” That’s the virtue of love incarnated. God’s love, the love of Christ - Christian love, makes a difference. Christ has no hands but our hands, no feet but our feet. We are His ambassadors, representing Him to the world. And when we are able to love as deeply as He has loved us through the love He places in us when He comes to live in us through the Holy Spirit, His love will make a difference in our congregation and in the world as we share His love every place and in every generation. People will notice, and Christian love is not only needed today, it has become indispensable. As we come to understand the full extent of God’s love or what it means that Jesus loved us to the end, not only will our Advent and Christmas be filled with His love, but so will the hearts and lives of all the people around us, and not just at Advent and Christmas, but the whole year through! Lives and congregations will grow in saving faith and the problems and tragedies sweeping our land will be healed because Jesus has loved us and all sinners

Leader: To the fullest degree, extremely, and with His whole heart;
Generations: Jesus loved us to the end. Leader: Amen.

UIM Advent Theme Sermon Response Hymn: Encourage children and those with sight or any reading challenges to listen to the words of this song/hymn and those with hearing challenges to read the words and be blessed by the message.

“Christ is the Love of God Come Down”
Sung to the tune of “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” LSB 358 / TLH 85/ LW 37 Verses 1, 2
Tune: Public Domain/ Text: Used by permission, Family Crossfires Ministries, Inc. © 2019

1. Christ is the love of God come down So we can, in His love, abound
And feel His love in heart and soul To help the world His love to know.

2. Christ is the full extent of love Come down from heav’n, from God above.
His love helps hearts and homes to be Filled with His love for all to see.

Offering: Taken according to custom. To add a stewardship or any hymn, type the number in your bulletin.

Prayers: You may use the following prayer petitions provided or your own prayers. The words to the prayer do not need to be printed in your bulletin. Do print the response if you choose to use it. Responses generate the participation of all generations. However, using responses some weeks and not other weeks can add variety and also meet both the needs of those who like responses and those who prefer not to say responses. If possible, pass out a printed copy of your prayers for those who cannot hear well or at all. This will help to include them and help them feel this worship is reaching out to them. Remind those sitting near them to help especially children respond and to point to responses for the hearing impaired. Conclude your prayers with the Lord’s Prayer unless it is part of your communion liturgy.

Prayer of the Church for Advent - Week One
Leader: Knowing that through Christ’s suffering and death, He showed us the full extent of His love, we humbly and reverently pray in His Holy name for all people to come to know Him and be filled with His love. Each time you hear “We pray in the name of Jesus,” please respond with: “Who showed us the full extent of His love.”

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Leader:  God our Father, You have created all people and in Your Word, You express Your sincere desire that all people be saved. You have sent Your Son to redeem the world. We thank and praise You for this act of great love and sacrifice. Help us to be worthy of the love You give us by loving You above all gods and proclaiming You every day and forever to be Lord of lords.

Leader: We pray in the name of Jesus,
Generations: Who showed us the full extent of His love.

Leader:  Savior of the world, save us from the sin of neglecting You in our thoughts and prayers, and of not partaking of Your Word and Sacraments so that we may be filled with Your help and strength to live lives of love and spread Your love to a world so desperately in need of Your love.

Leader: We pray in the name of Jesus,
Generations: Who showed us the full extent of His love.

Leader:  Holy Spirit, sanctify and strengthen in us faith that will bind us together in and through Your love so that we may love each other as You first loved us. Cause Your love in us to grow so that in all we do and say, Your love will show and become a catalyst of faith and strength to change the lives of people who cannot love into people who are strong and able to live in Your love.

Leader: We pray in the name of Jesus,
Generations: Who showed us the full extent of His love.

Leader:  Gracious Jesus, who out of great love came to earth in human form to live as we live and to help us in times of need, have compassion on those who are sick, hospitalized, or recovering, (especially ______________). Be with those who mourn, (especially ______________). Help each one of us support them in their needs in and through Your love, praying for them at all times and also having personal contact with them whenever possible.

Leader: We pray in the name of Jesus,
Generations: Who showed us the full extent of His love.

Leader: Almighty and everlasting God, we thank and praise Your Holy Name for Your love and for Christ our Savior, who is and will always be proof of the full extent of Your great love for us. Fill us with Your love so it overflows to give Christmas a whole new meaning for us and all who see Your love shining in our hearts and lives. Make Your love overpower hatred and fill the earth with more and more of Your love every day.

Leader: We pray in the name of Jesus,
Generations: Who showed us the full extent of His love.

Leader: All these things we lay at Your throne, trusting that You hear and will answer...
[as we boldly say: AMEN!]

Or if you are not celebrating Holy Communion:
[as we join together in praying the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray: “Our Father....]

[Holy Communion may be celebrated according to custom.]  
Note: You may choose a Communion Hymn.

Benediction:  May God be with us and bless us with His love through Christ, who showed us the full extent of God’s love on the cross.  May we truly feel God’s love and share it this Advent and Christmas as well as every day of our lives to help bring those who feel unloved to Christ!

All God’s People say: Amen.
Closing Advent Hymn: To include children, alert the congregation to sing and have the organist replay the last two phrases of each verse specifically so that children can sing them. Encourage those sitting near children to cue them to listen to hear these phrases as they are sung so they can repeat them. Adding this repetition can also allow others with sight or learning challenges to participate. Encourage those with any challenges that keep them from singing this hymn to listen to the words and those with hearing challenges to read the words of this hymn as it is sung so all can be blessed by the message.

“Hark the Glad Sound” LSB 349/ TLH 66/ LW 29

Memorizing God’s Word For Strength: Print the God’s Word For Us Today passage from UIM SS or one passage from the Advent Devotions into your bulletin on the last page.

BEFORE WORSHIPERS LEAVE:
• Read the passage to be memorized during the following week together as congregation.
• Encourage generations to read their Advent Christmas Devotions and to do the daily discussions and activities.
• Make craft instructions and supplies available as you desire.