



STORIES **AND** RITUALS

Meaningful **MENTORING**

LESSON 4

Stories & Rituals: Meaningful Mentoring

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by the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania

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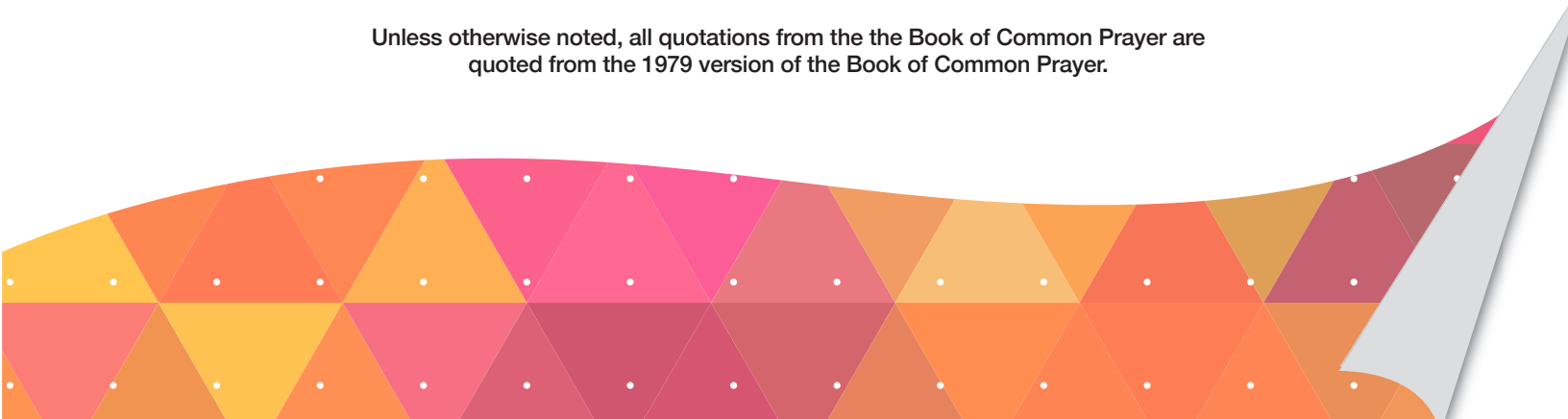
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MEANINGFUL MENTORING

Advent Wreath Making

Lesson Focus: Advent Traditions and Practices

Lesson Goal: To explore and reflect upon Advent traditions in the Church.

Activity: Make an Advent wreath with your mentee.

Duration of Lesson: 60-90 minutes

Materials Needed

- Lesson Sheet 4.1 (*Advent Candle Meanings and Reflections*)
- Pencils or pens
- Greens
- Four candles (*these can be either three purple and one pink or four blue, based on your own church's traditions*)
- Advent wreath
- Camera or phone with the ability to take pictures (*optional*)

LESSON OVERVIEW



The Story and the Ritual

This lesson will invite both you and your mentee to explore the stories and rituals of Advent in the Christian church. One of the rituals traditionally used during the season of Advent is the making and lighting of an Advent wreath.

The Advent wreath is a very old Christian tradition. Starting on the first Sunday of Advent, an additional candle is lit each following Sunday. On the last Sunday before Christmas all four candles are lit. Each Sunday of Advent a different candle is lit in preparation for Christmas. In today's lesson, you and your mentee will work together to create your own Advent wreath.



What's the Focus?

Advent is known in many Christian denominations as a season of preparation. Indeed, since we devote so much of our prayers, study, and imagination to the upcoming birth of Jesus in the four weeks that make up Advent, it could truly be called the Church's "pregnant pause." It is a season that invites us to wait, to grow and to expect new life—both Jesus' and the new life that is ushered in for all nature by the incarnation. The Advent wreath is a tool for you to use to help prepare the heart, mind, and soul of your mentee, as well as yourself, for the birth of Christ.



What's the Point?

The days and weeks leading up to Christmas are busy times, filled with services, parties, family traditions, and much more. Furthermore, our consumerist culture sometimes distracts us from reflecting on and exploring the meaning of the season. Advent is a time for us to take a break from the busyness in our lives and prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ.

There are many traditions and practices that help us take a break from the busy and welcome Christ into our lives. Your student may already have these traditions; they may not. Your student may already understand the meaning of Advent practices, and they might not, too. That's okay. This lesson is designed for both you and your mentee to reflect upon the practices and traditions in which we participate during this season. It should encourage you to discover (or re-discover) the reasons why we celebrate Advent and how we prepare for the coming of Jesus.



Preparing for Your Lesson

Contact clergy or other leadership at your church to see if they have materials to create an Advent wreath. If you are unable to find an Advent wreath to decorate, find an alternative option. You can be creative and use any resources you have. Find a location for your session. If possible, this should be a public place; if your meeting must be in a private home, be sure to follow all Safe Church policies and procedures.

Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 4.1 (*Advent Candle Meanings and Reflections*) and to bring with you. Look over the sheet and familiarize yourself with the material.

THE LESSON

- Meet with your mentee on your designated date and time. If traveling to your wreath making location together, follow all necessary Safe Church policies and procedures (*see the Suggested Safe Church Guidelines supplement for sample policies and procedures*).
- Start by gathering greens to decorate your Advent wreath. If you are unable to find greens in your location, be creative and use resources from your immediate natural environment. Use this time to free your mind and be creative.
- Decorate your wreath with gathered greens. As you decorate your wreath, discuss the following questions:

1. How do you prepare your heart for the birth of the Christ child?
2. What are your family traditions for the Christmas season?
3. What's your favorite part about Christmas?
4. Do you have any unique Advent or Christmas traditions?
5. What are some of the traditions, events, or experiences are you expecting this Christmas season (either with your family or at church)?

- Place candles into the Advent wreath. Put the candles in the wreath one at a time. As you place each candle, read the definition or meaning of each candle on Lesson Sheet 4.1. Then, answer the two questions about the candle on the Lesson Sheet.

Note: Some traditions or communities might have slightly different meanings or definitions for each candle. If your congregation uses different definitions, feel free to adapt the Lesson Sheet to include yours.

- Work through each candle, reading the definition and answering the questions for each candle.
- Once you place all of the candles, light the first candle (*or more, depending during which week of Advent you are meeting*).
- Take a minute and say a silent prayer that the hope of the Advent season will enter your heart.
- If possible, plan the next date and time you will meet and write these times in the space provided on Lesson Sheet 4.1. Also set a date that can serve as a “Plan B,” or backup, meeting (just in case something happens and you can’t meet on the first date you picked).
- If you want to document your time together, take a photo of you and your mentee (preferably with your wreath) before you leave your meeting.
- If you are transporting your mentee home, follow all necessary Safe Church policies and procedures.

WRAPPING UP

Take a few moments to reflect on your mentoring experience. Ask yourself the following questions. You may wish to write your answers down in a journal

1. Was your mentee open and transparent while sharing their Advent and Christmas traditions?
2. Were there particular moments in this mentoring session that impressed you or surprised you?
3. Where did you see God during your session?
4. Based on your conversations and experience, do you have any new insights on your mentee? What are these insights?

If necessary, report any new insights, issues or concerns to church leadership.

LOOKING AHEAD

For your next session, you will be attending a worship service at another church community. Once a date is set for your next meeting, agree upon a location for you to meet. Ideally, you should meet for worship at a Christian church, not within your denomination. Find a church community that hosts a service that fits with both you and your mentee's schedules.

LESSON SHEET 4.1

Advent Candle Meanings and Reflections

For each candle of the Advent wreath, read the following definitions and answer the following questions:

The Advent wreath is a circle, symbolizing the nature of God. God has no beginning and end, and God's love is universal. The greens with which we decorate our wreath symbolize the hope and belief that the Savior brings us during this season.

Candle One: Hope

We light the first candle (*either purple or blue*) on the first Sunday of Advent. The first candle symbolizes hope. Some people also call this the "prophet's candle" because we read and hear the prophecy of the Messiah's coming. The prophets brought words of hope to God's people as they talked about the coming of a Savior. As we light this candle, we reflect on the hope that comes to us with the birth of Jesus.

What are you hope for this Advent season? _____

How are you going to show God's love through hope? _____

Candle Two: Peace

We light the second candle (*either purple or blue*) on the second Sunday of Advent. This candle symbolizes peace. Some traditions call this the "Bethlehem candle," reminding us of the location where the Prince of Peace was born.

What gives you peace? _____

How will you share God's love through peace? _____

Candle Three: Joy

We light the third candle on the third Sunday of Advent. Sometimes this candle is pink, representing joy. This candle is sometime called the “Gaudete (*pronounced gow-da-tay*) candle.” The word “Gaudete” means “rejoice.” This candle reminds us to stop and remember the joy that is to come from the Christmas story. Some traditions also call this the “Shepherd’s candle,” reminding us of the humble shepherds who first heard the good news of Jesus’ birth.

What gives you joy during Advent and Christmas? _____

How can you bring others joy? _____

Candle Four: Love

We light the fourth candle (either purple or blue) on the fourth Sunday of Advent. This candle symbolizes love. Some traditions also call this candle the “Angel’s Candle,” reminding us of the love that came into the world at Christ’s birth.

How do you feel loved? _____

How can you share God’s love? _____

Next meeting:

Date:

Time:

Location:

“Plan B” meeting:

Date:

Time:

Location: