



Advent

ACTIVITIES FOR
WHĀNAU AND TAMARIKI



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We have prepared an activity based on the theme of each week of Advent. These may need amending to suit the age and stage of those in your whānau but we hope they will offer you an opportunity to engage in this season simply and meaningfully with your tamariki. You might come up with new variations!

We would love to see pictures of you and your whānau engaging with Advent – please share them on our Laidlaw Facebook page or tag us on Instagram.



An advent karakia:

***As we get ready for Christmas
we remember, loving God, that in
Jesus you came to live with us and
rescue us. Jesus, we think of you
as a little vulnerable baby, and we
remember you know what it is like to
be a child like us.***

WAITING

WEEK ONE

Psalm 27:13-14

13 I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

14 Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!



Prep:

- A timer or stopwatch
- Frozen ice cubes or silicone muffin trays with treats hidden in the frozen water (could be a small toy, a sweet, even flowers)
- A hairdryer if you have one.
- You will need to create the ice cubes a day or so before.

Activity:

Turn out the frozen ice cubes/shapes and explore what you can see inside them. Look at them from different angles and get excited about what is inside. Say – “when this defrosts you can have it/play with it/put it in your room/eat it” (depending on what you decide to put in them). Ask “how long do you think it will take?” Use the timer or stop watch and the hairdryer to speed up the process if you want to.

****variation** – you can also do this with an ice cream container of water and many items inside and children can play with it in a warm space using spoons to scrape away the ice/make it melt faster.

Reflection:

Sometimes waiting feels difficult, especially when we are waiting for something we really want. God’s people had been promised that a Saviour would come and it was years and years. They read in the Bible the promises God had made and their hearts waited with hope and excitement for that day to come. It has been wonderful to watch you waiting with excitement too and I think God watches us with excitement to discover his love and Jesus, God’s son.

Prayer:

Thank you God that you always keep your promises even when it feels like a long time sometimes. Help us to get our hearts ready to celebrate again the birth of Jesus this Christmas.

PREPARING

WEEK TWO

Luke 1:76-79

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the
Most High; for you will go before the Lord to
prepare his ways,
77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
78 By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet
into the way of peace.



Prep:

- Things from around your home to create a special afternoon tea or teddy bears' picnic.

Activity:

Set a table together in a way that is particularly special – perhaps a table cloth, special plates, flowers from the garden, candles, and even baking, or decorating baking together if that is something you enjoy. Set up a table and invite some honoured guests to join you – perhaps friends, neighbours or even teddies for a picnic. Whilst you are doing this, use the language of preparing and getting ready.

Reflection:

Jesus had a cousin called John who spoke to people about God and baptised them in a river. The Bible talks about him getting people's hearts ready to receive Jesus and his teaching. Just like we made our table ready to receive our honoured guests/friends, the Bible invites us to make our hearts open and ready to hear from Jesus. The beautiful promise that John's dad, Zechariah, spoke about John when he was born also reminds us that we can invite others to know and experience the love of Jesus. Christmas is an invitation to all of us to meet Jesus.

Prayer:

Thank you God for the chance to create a beautiful/special place together and celebrate today. Help us to prepare our hearts to open to your love and to share that love with others too.

GOD IS HERE

WEEK THREE

Isaiah 12:6

Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.



Prep:

- Select some special items from your home and hide them in places they wouldn't normally be found – teapot on the pillow, teddy in the shower
- Make a list of simple pictures of these items or written words.

Activity:

We have a list of things that belong in our house and they are definitely here but I can't find them. Use language like – it is definitely here, it is in this room, maybe you need to look in a different place. When you find the items, celebrate finding them together and laugh about how they were in unexpected places.

Reflection:

God's people knew the Saviour/Messiah was coming but they had different ideas about where or how he might come. God placed a star in the sky that was a clue about where Jesus was and there were clues all through the Bible about where Jesus would be born and what family he would come from...but God still surprised people. They did not expect to find Jesus being born to poor teenagers in an animal stall. The angels told some shepherds where to look just like I helped you to follow the clues. We found the things were indeed still in our house, but they weren't where we expected them. We know that God's Spirit is at work everywhere but we try to keep our eyes and ears open to see what God is up to. We remember that God still surprises us.

Prayer:

Thank you God for coming to us in Jesus and for being here with us. Help us to see and join in with your good work on earth today, wherever we go.

HE WILL FEED HIS FLOCK

WEEK FOUR

Isaiah 40:11

He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

See also John 10.

Prep:

- Select some edible items from the house – some may be less enjoyable (e.g. potato peelings) and if possible at least one food your child/ren would consider a treat.
- Arrange these on a tray. (This activity would be great to do at breakfast or dinner time or a time when you gather as a whānau to eat and people are hungry.)
- Cover the items with a teatowel.

Activity:

Ask – who is feeling hungry? I have some things under this teatowel for us to eat for (breakfast/dinner/snack time). What do you think might be under here? What do you hope might be under here? After some general discussion lift the teatowel and enjoy the reactions to what is on offer. 'Guess' which one you know they would like. 'Guess' which one they hope they don't get. Ask – is there enough here for us? Do you think I know what you need? Now present them with the actual meal you are going to eat. (Perhaps with a treat of berries added or some other treat you consider appropriate.)

Reflection:

As you eat your meal together, share this reflection. In the Bible, God is often described as a shepherd. In his story telling, Jesus also describes himself as a shepherd. Being a shepherd in Jesus' time was very different to how it is in Aotearoa. The ground there is not lush and green with many rivers and streams and so the shepherds needed to be very skilful at finding food for their sheep. The shepherds loved their sheep and they had a special call that their sheep understood and came to. Isn't that cool? When we eat this meal we remember that God cares for our needs. God meets our needs for food but also God meets the need in our hearts to be loved and to be able to be cared for. God doesn't provide us with bits and scraps of his love (like potato peelings or old crusts). When Jesus comes to us on earth God is giving us the best shepherd. God is giving Godself to us, to love us, protect us and care for us.

Prayer:

Thank you God that you care for us and you know us, love us and provide for us.

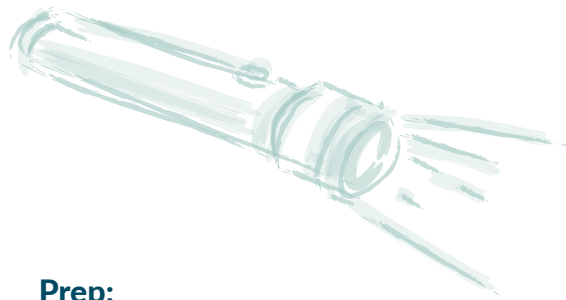


LIGHT – JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!

WEEK FIVE

Isaiah 9:2-3

2 The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
3 You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest.



Prep:

- You will need a sheet of plain A4 style paper
- A shape cut from dark paper or cardboard (a left-over cereal box for instance)
- A torch – the one on a phone works well

Activity:

Hold up the piece of paper and ask your child what they see behind it. (Nothing because the paper isn't transparent.) Now holding up the shape behind the paper, shine the torch from behind the paper and watch how the paper becomes transparent (ish) and the shape appears. Have fun trying to do this with other household items and look at the shapes that can be made.

Reflection:

Isn't it funny how the light changed the way we saw the paper and the shapes that were hidden behind it? When Jesus, who we call the true light, came into the world he showed us that some of the things we thought and did needed to be looked at in a different way. Jesus also showed us God's love in a new way, a way that was much bigger and more including than we might have imagined it before we met Jesus. Just like the torch light, Jesus shows us things we couldn't see. Especially, Jesus shows us that we are never alone, God is always there even when we cannot see God. Jesus shows us God's love in new and exciting ways.

Prayer:

***Jesus, would you shine your love into my heart
and help me to see your love in new ways.***

GLORY

WEEK SIX

Psalm 72:19

Praise be to his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen and Amen.

Isaiah 60:1-5a

1 Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
2 For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
3 Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
4 Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their
nurses' arms.
5 Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice



Prep:

- This activity requires little prep for those with very small children who delight to wake us before the sun rises, but does require setting an alarm for the rest of us.
- Perhaps also take a camera to capture the moment together and some blankets.

Activity:

Before the sun rises go to a place/window/favourite spot and set yourselves up to watch the sun rise. As the light breaks through read the Bible verses for this week and consider playing a piece of music to add to the wonder of the moment. For example, Handel's Messiah Hallelujah chorus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUZEtVbJT5c>

Take a little silence if it is possible for your whānau to achieve this! Ask each person what is something they hear, see, and feel.

Reflection:

These verses talk about God's glory filling the earth. Like the time before the sun rises it is hard to imagine the light being able to chase away the darkness as it slowly rises. God's glory is like this too – sometimes we see moments of it and it stuns us. Other times God's glory is like the first glimmer of dawn – it fills us with a feeling of hope. We are reminded that because of Jesus and the life he lived God has made his glory accessible to us all. It's pretty wonderful.

Prayer:

God, give us open eyes to see your Glory. Thank you that you are filling all things and that you love us so much. Thank you for the beauty we see and hear. Thank you for your creative wonder.