



For many families, the centerpiece of their Advent celebration is the Advent wreath. It consists of four candles, surrounded by evergreen branches. The light of the candles signifies the light of Christ, Who will come into the world at Christmas.

The Advent wreath has four candles, one for each week of Advent. Three of the candles are purple; one is pink. The colors add symbolism to the wreath. Purple reminds us that Advent, like Lent, is a time of penance, fasting, and prayer; while the rose candle is lit on the Third Sunday in Advent, to give us encouragement and to remind us that Christmas is indeed coming.

How to make an Advent wreath:

1. Take the pine boughs and weave them into the wire frame. There is really no right or wrong way to do this! Then, when you're happy with where the bough is—take a small piece of floral wire and twist it to the wreath frame to hold it in place. Just make sure that the branches don't stick up too high, that they might come close to the candle flames as the candles burn down. (Hint: Don't make it a piece of wire that's too big. Remember—at the end of the Christmas season, you're going to have to undo all that wire! Less is more in this case.)
2. Take three pieces of purple ribbon, and one piece of pink ribbon, and tie them around the candle holder parts of the wire frame.
3. Now it's time to put the candles in. Match the color of the candles to the colors on the ribbons. If the candles don't fit snugly, you can melt a bit of wax from the bottom of the candle into the holder and then put it back into the holder—the melted wax will hold it in place.

The hard work is done. It's time to bless your Advent wreath so that you can begin using it! Here is a blessing for an Advent wreath:

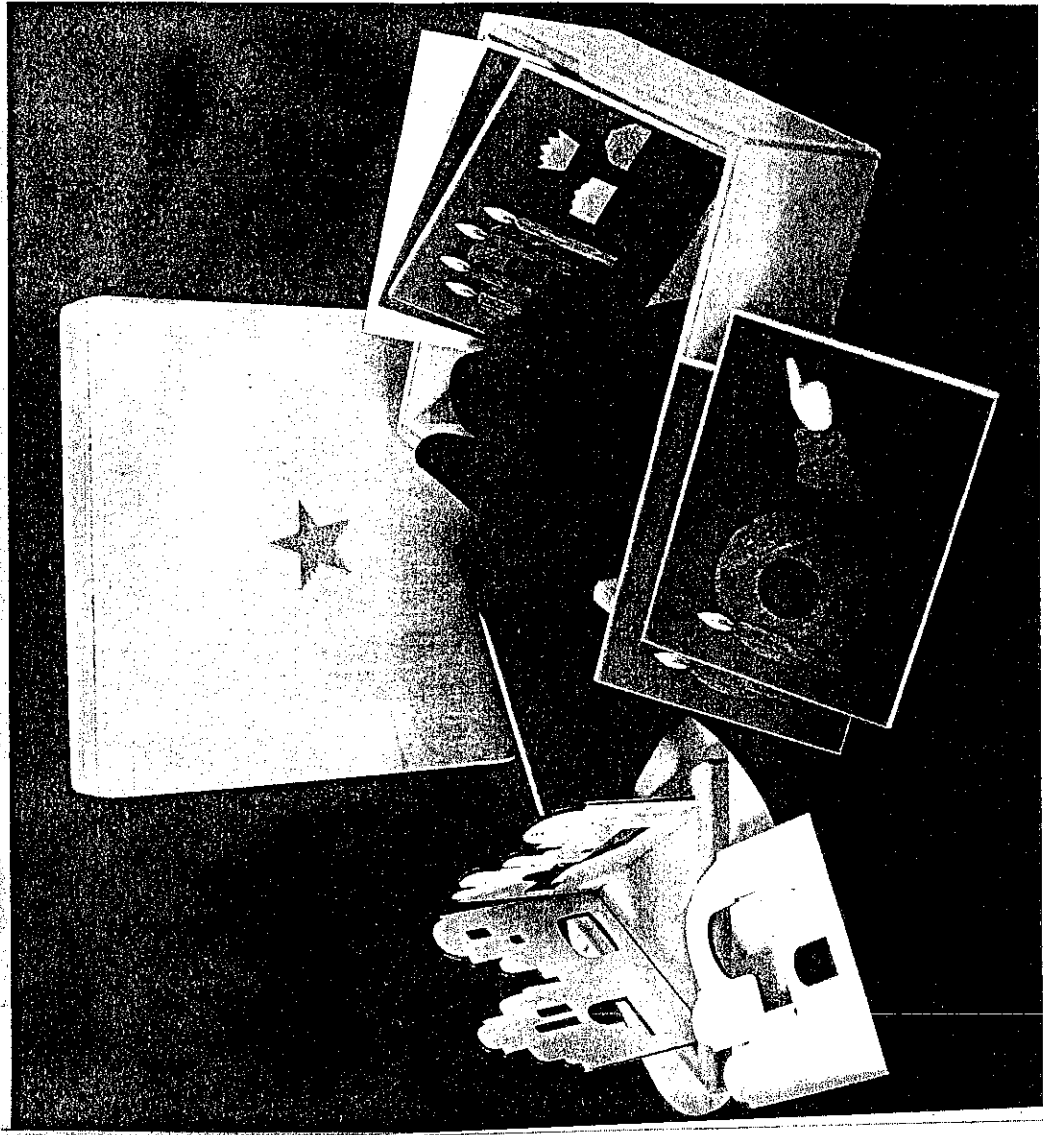
O God, by whose word all things are made holy, we ask that Your blessings be upon this wreath, and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.





The Story of God with Us

Christmas



With this introduction we are now ready to present what to do and what to say. The action is written on the left because it sets the context and spirit for speaking and hearing the words. What you say is on the right of the script, because the words are also important. The words are conceived to be open to all ages and kinds of people, but they need to be said with love, because Christian language is the language of love.

The script assumes that you will use the royal color purple to help prepare for Christmas, but many churches use Mary's color, which is blue. If you would like to use blue for your underlay, please let the people at Godly Play Resources know when you order your materials. They already understand this and are ready to help you. Now, let's see more specifically what "storying" Christmas involves.

What to Do and What to Say

The First Sunday in Advent

MOVEMENTS

Pick up the box and look at it with curiosity and respect. Place it ceremoniously back on the table. Look at those gathered and say quietly but with intensity:

This is the time when we get ready to come close to the mystery of Christmas. It is the time we call "Advent."

Move the box to one side and remove the lid. Put the box inside the lid. Take out the model of Bethlehem and put it together. Place it on the table between you and the others.

Here is Bethlehem. This is the season when we are *all* on our way to Bethlehem.

Take out the underlay and place it on the table to your right between you and the model of Bethlehem.

This is also the time of the color purple, the color of kings and queens. It is a serious and sometimes sad color. It shows that a king is coming to Bethlehem, but *this* king was not the kind of king anyone thought was coming.

Today is the first Sunday in Advent.

Unroll the underlay to your left to show the first panel.

Place the first plaque on the underlay.

Point to Bethlehem as you speak.

This is the time when we remember the prophets and how they pointed the way. Prophets know what is important, even when others don't. They knew that something wonderful was going to happen in Bethlehem that would change everything.

You then pause, and, taking plenty of time, touch the first plaque.

Now, I wonder if there is anyone in this family who has ever known a prophet?

Look questioningly at those who are gathered at the table. Invite them to speak, using your manner as much as your words.

Each year the wondering will seem more natural. Besides, just because people don't say anything doesn't mean that they aren't wondering to themselves silently.

Be sure to be supportive and be sure that everyone who wants to has a chance to speak. When the wondering is finished, the leader concludes by saying:

Our family is part of this story.
Thanks be to God!

Put everything back into the box without hurrying. When everything is returned, replace the lid and say:

Amen.

Conversation might continue as people leave the table.

The Second Sunday in Advent

Pick up the box, look at it with curiosity and respect. Place it ceremoniously back on the table.

Look at the people and say:

This is the time when we get ready to come close to the mystery of Christmas. It is the time we call "Advent."

Move the box to one side and remove the lid. Put the box inside the lid. Take out the model of Bethlehem and put it together. Place it on the table between you and the others.

Here is Bethlehem. This is the season when we are *all* on our way to Bethlehem.

Take out the underlay. Place it on the table to your right between you and the model of Bethlehem.

This is the time of the color purple, the color of kings and queens. It is a serious and sometimes sad color. It shows that a king is coming to Bethlehem, but *this* king was not the kind of king anyone thought was coming.

Unroll the first panel.

On the first Sunday in Advent, we remembered the prophets.

Place the first plaque on the underlay.

Unroll the second panel. Hold the second plaque in your hands and show it to the others.

Today we remember how the mother Mary and the father Joseph made their way to Bethlehem.

Place the second plaque on the underlay. Contemplate it for a moment, perhaps tracing the figures with your finger.

Now, I wonder if there is anyone in this family who ever went on a great journey?

Look at those who are gathered around at the table. Invite them to speak, using your manner as much as your words.

Just because people don't say things out loud, does not mean that they aren't wondering silently within.

Be supportive and be sure that everyone who wants to speak has a chance. When the wondering is finished, you conclude by saying:

Put everything back in the box without hurrying. When everything is put back, the lid is replaced and the celebration is complete. Say:

Conversation might continue as people leave the table.

The Third Sunday in Advent

Pick up the box and look at it with care and curiosity. Put it back ceremoniously on the table. Look at the people gathered and say:

This is the time when we get ready to come close to the mystery of Christmas. It is the time we call "Advent."

Move the box to one side, remove the lid, and put the box inside the lid. Take out the model of Bethlehem and put it together. Place it on the table between you and the others.

*Here is Bethlehem. This is the season when we are *all* on our way to Bethlehem.*

Take out the underlay and place it on the table to your right between you and the model of Bethlehem.

*This is the time of the color purple, the color of kings and queens. It is a serious and sometimes sad color. It shows that a king is coming to Bethlehem, but *this* king was not the kind of king anyone thought was coming.*

The first Sunday in Advent, we remembered the prophets.

The second Sunday in Advent, we remembered how the mother Mary and the father Joseph made their way to Bethlehem.

Place the second plaque on the underlay.

Pick up the third plaque and show it to the others.

Today we remember the shepherds in the fields, keeping their flocks by night. They heard singing in the sky and saw a great light, so they ran to see the little king.

Place it on the underlay. Consider it for a moment, perhaps tracing the figures for a moment, and then say:

Now, I wonder if there is anyone in this family who has ever heard or seen mysterious things?

Look at those gathered at the table. Invite them to speak by using your manner as much as your words.

Be sure to be supportive and help everyone who wants to speak have a chance. When the wondering is finished, conclude by saying:

Put everything back in the box without hurrying. When everything is put back, replace the lid and the celebration is complete. Say:

Conversation might continue as people leave the table.

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

Pick up the box and look at it with curiosity and respect. Place it ceremoniously back on the table. Look at the people gathered and say:

**Our family is part of this story.
Thanks be to God!**

Amen.

This is the time when we get ready to come close to the mystery of Christmas. It is the time we call "Advent."

Move the box to one side and remove the lid. Place the box in the lid. Take out the model of Bethlehem and put it together. Place it on the table between you and the others.

Here is Bethlehem. This is the season when we are *all* on our way to Bethlehem.

Take out the underlay. Place it on the table to your right between you and Bethlehem.

This is the time of the color purple, the color of kings and queens. It is a serious and sometimes sad color. It shows that a king is coming to Bethlehem, but *this* king was not the kind of king anyone thought was coming.

Unroll the panels, as needed.

On the first Sunday in Advent, we remembered the prophets.

Place the first plaque.

On the second Sunday in Advent, we remembered how the mother Mary and father Joseph made their way to Bethlehem.

Place the second plaque.

On the third Sunday in Advent, we remembered the shepherds in the fields keeping their flocks by night. They heard singing in the sky and saw a great light, so they ran to see the little king.

Place the third plaque.

Today we remember how the three kings, the "wise men," the *magi*, followed the star to find the baby, to adore⁴ him, and to give him gifts.

Place the fourth plaque on the under-
lay. Contemplate it for a moment,
perhaps tracing the figures with
your finger.

Now, I wonder if anyone in this
family has ever adored a child or
given gifts?

Look at those who are gathered
at the table. Invite them to speak,
using more your manner than urging
them by your words.

4. We don't use the verb "to adore" much these days. We might say "adorable," as an adjective, but the meaning stressed here is an action that is more than something sweet and charming although that is part of it. "To adore" the Christ child is complex, which Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) suggested in one of his five beautiful hymns, written to honor the gift of Christ's presence in the Blessed Sacrament at the request of Pope Urban IV. It begins:

*Adoro te devote, latens Deitas,
Quae sub his figuris vere latitas;
Tibi se cor meum totum subjicit
Quia te contemplanus totum deficit.*
I devoutly adore you, O hidden deity
Truly hidden beneath these appearances
My whole heart submits to you,
And in contemplating you, it surrenders
itself completely.

The adoration of the Christ Child involves God being hidden beneath "appearances." Thomas's poetry about the bread and wine of the Mass suggests how God is always hidden and revealed at the same time. This is also true for the Christ Child in Christmas and God in all of God's creation.

The *magi* gave gifts to the Christ Child in addition to adoring him. Dickens probed the giving of gifts in his *A Christmas Carol*. What changed in Scrooge to make him generous? What did his gifts express? Dickens wrote at the end of his story that Scrooge "knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge." Why? It is because a true gift has no strings attached, as our tax code says. It is also about the giving away of one's self, which our tax code does not comment on.

Wait in an expectant way. If no
wondering takes place, don't worry.
Each year wondering together will
become more natural. Besides, just
because people don't say things out
loud does not mean that they are
not wondering quietly to themselves.

Be supportive so that everyone who
wants to speak has a chance. When
the wondering is finished, say:

Our family is part of this story.
Thanks be to God!

Put everything back into the box with-
out hurrying. When everything is
put back, the lid is replaced and the
celebration is complete. Say:

Amen.

Conversation might continue as
people leave the table.

Christmas Day

Pick up the box and look at it with
interest and curiosity, then ceremoniously
put it back on the table. Look at the
people gathered and say:

Today is the moment we've been
waiting for! It is time to enter the
mystery of Christmas.

Move the box to one side and remove
the lid. Place the box in the lid. Take
out the model of Bethlehem and put it
together. Place it on the table between
you and the others.

Here is Bethlehem. Today we arrive
with all those who have gone before
us!

Take out the underlay and place it on the table to your right between you and the model of Bethlehem.

This changes everything, so the color changes from the color of getting ready to the color of pure celebration!

Unroll the panels as needed.

On the first Sunday in Advent, we remembered the prophets.

Place the first plaque.

On the second Sunday, we remembered Mary and Joseph as they made their way toward Bethlehem.

Place the second plaque.

On the third Sunday, we remembered the shepherds in the fields, keeping their flocks by night. They heard singing in the sky and saw a great light, so they ran to see the little king.

Place the third plaque.

On the fourth Sunday, we remembered how the *magi* adored the Christ Child and gave him gifts.

Place the fourth plaque.

Today we adore God's gift of God, as a little child, who changes us by the wonder of Christmas.

Place the fifth plaque on the white panel. Contemplate it for a moment, perhaps tracing the figures with your finger.

Now, I wonder if anyone in this family has ever become a gift?

Look at those who are gathered. Invite them to speak, using your manner as much as your words.

Support the possibility of wondering for all who want to speak. When it appears that the wondering is near the end, say:

Our family is part of this story.
Thanks be to God!

Put everything back in the box without hurrying. When everything is put back, replace the lid and the celebration is complete. Say:
Amen.

Conversation might continue after the "Amen" as people linger or leave the table.

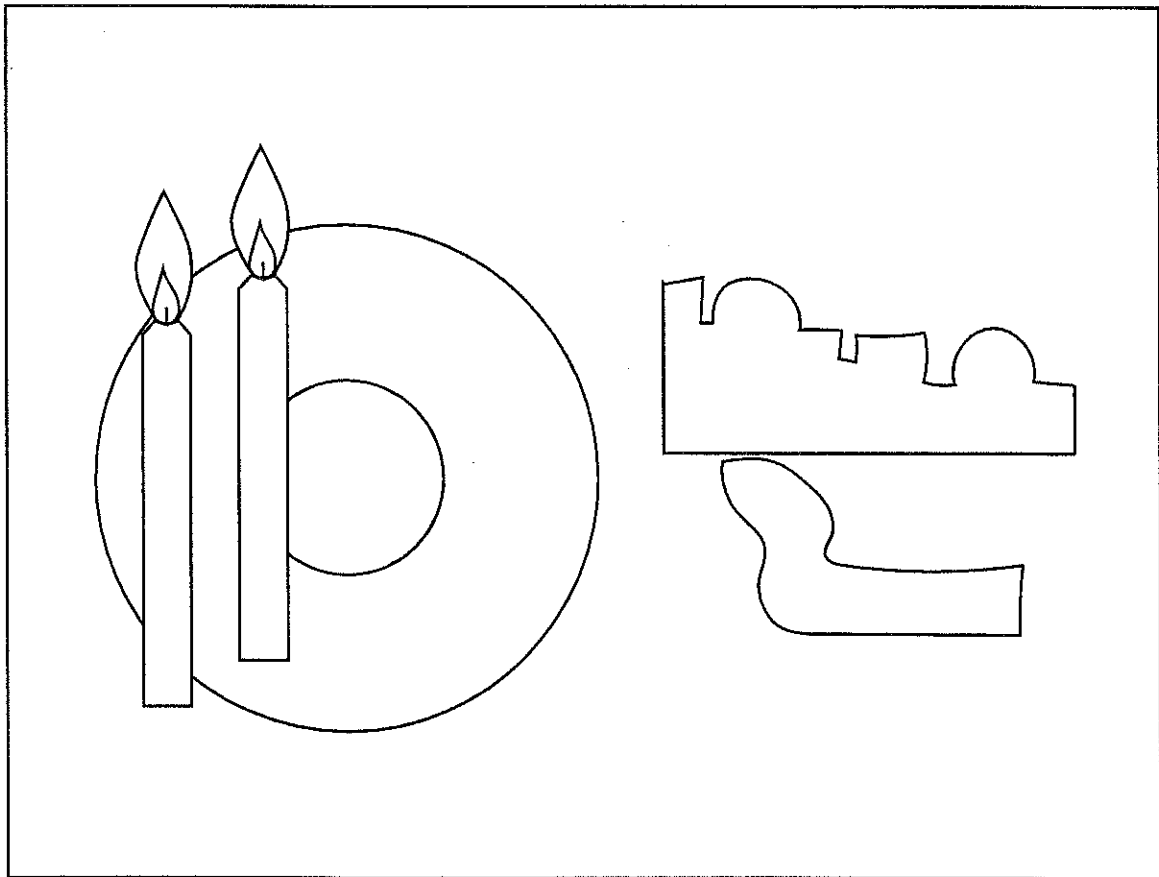
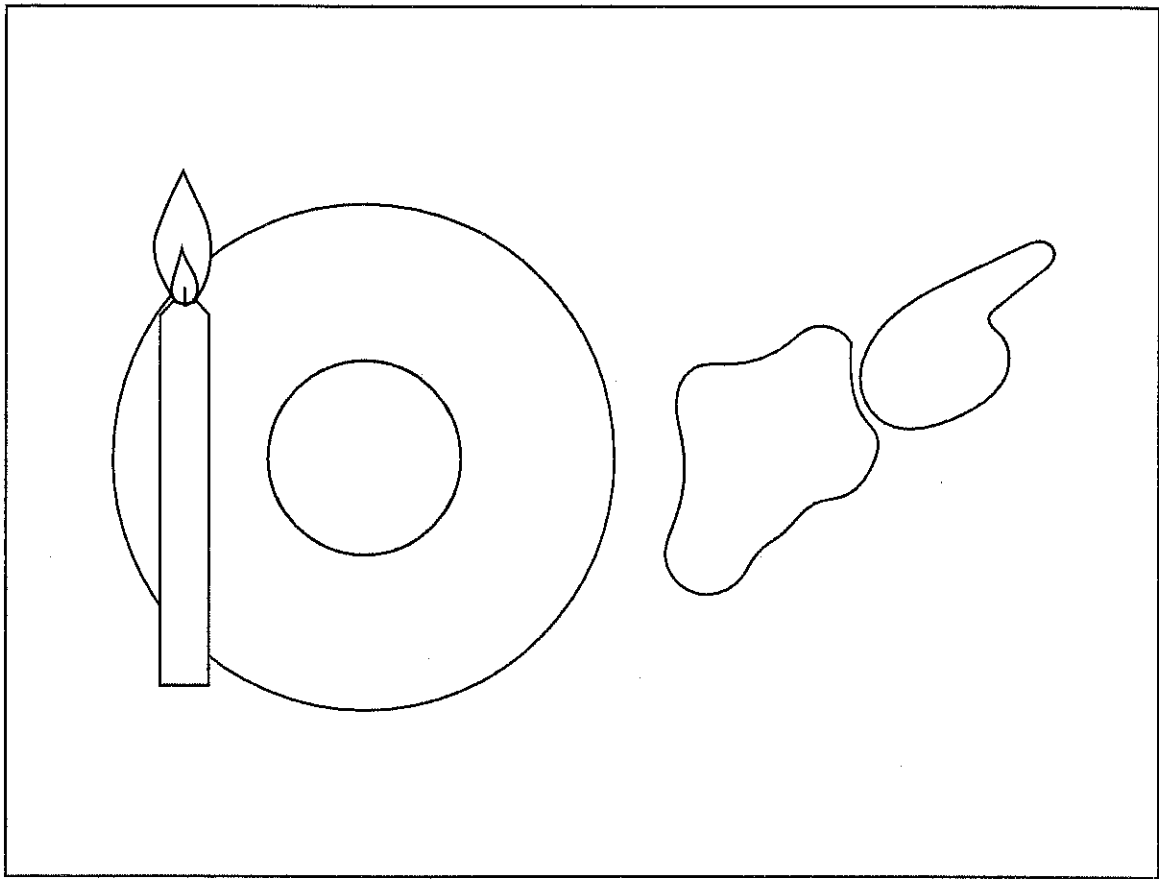
During the season of Advent and Christmas, you may want to leave the box on the table, so family members can wonder with it when they choose. You might also put it away to clear the table for other uses. Where you put the box and how you handle it is important, as mentioned above. It shows how much you value Christmas, your family, and the place of God's wondrous creativity of your home.

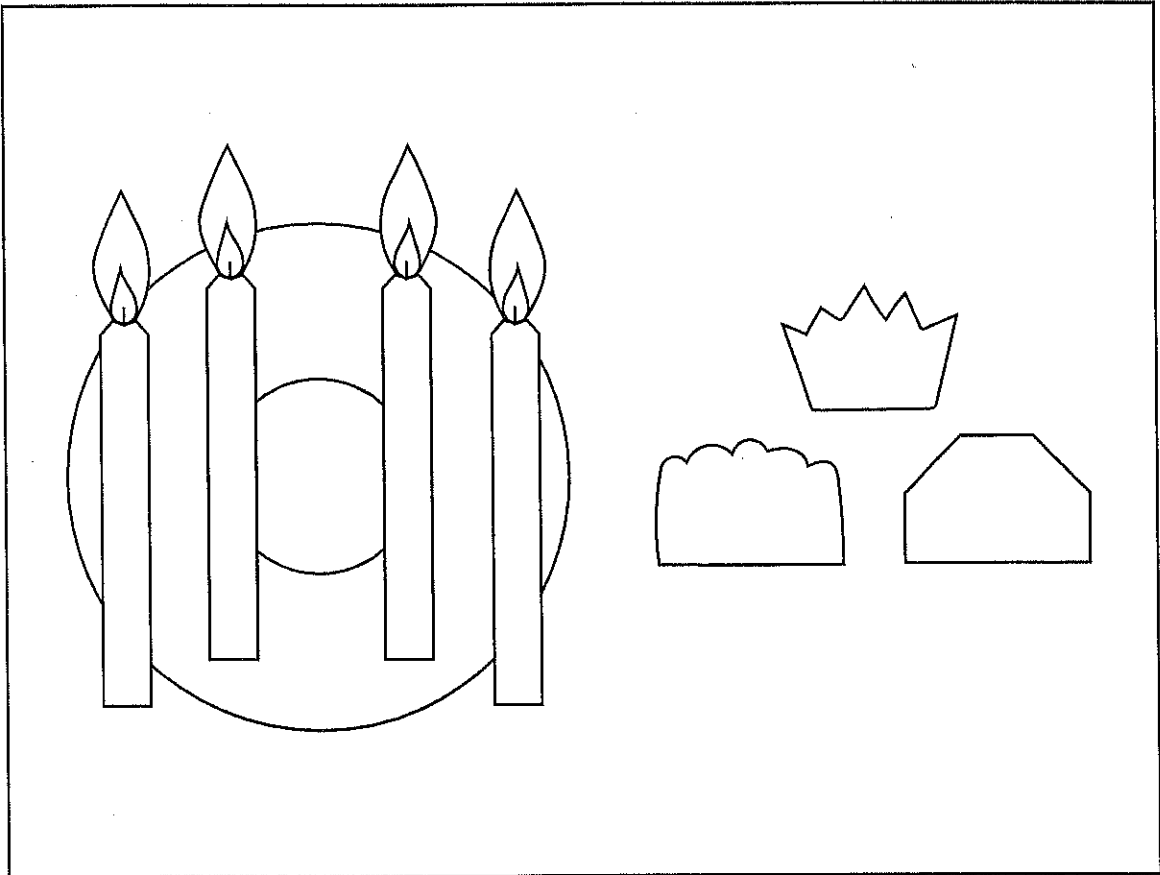
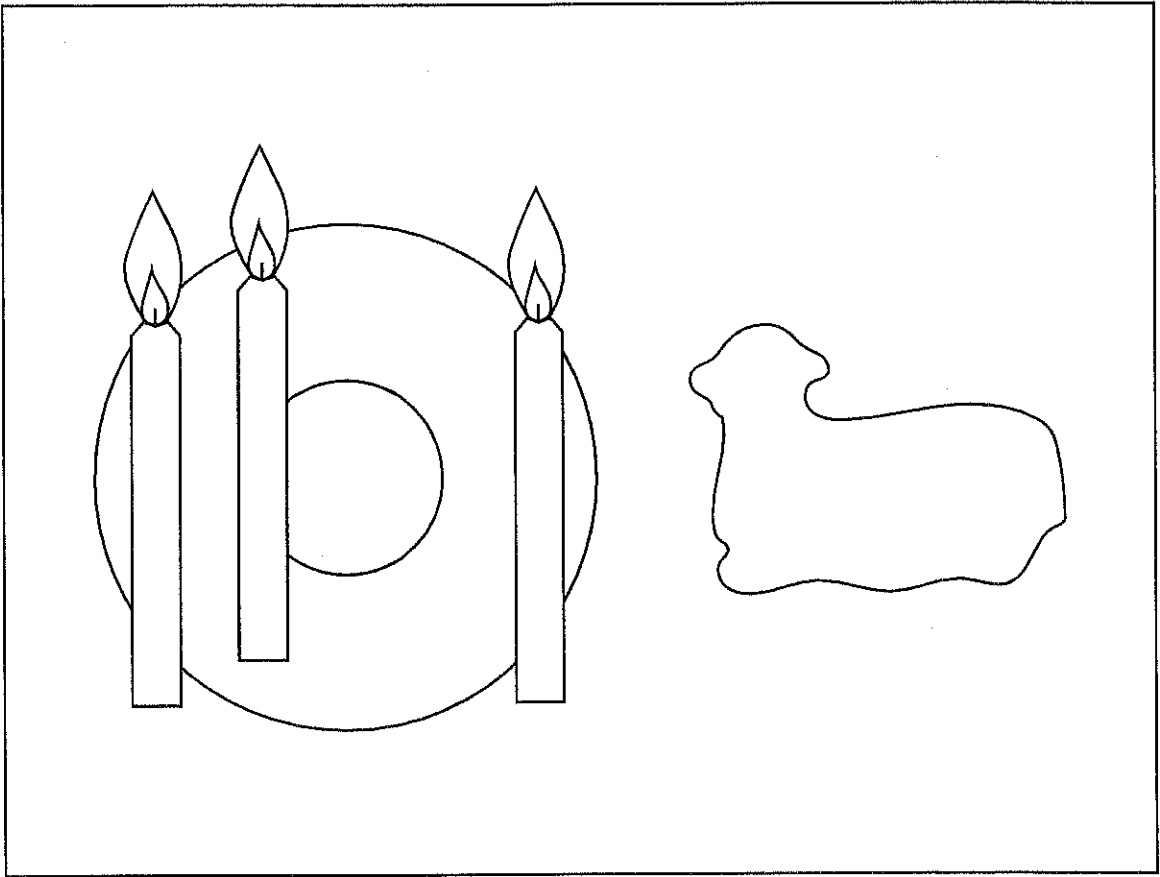
There is another choice you might need to make. Is there a way to incorporate the lighting of an Advent Wreath with the "storying" of Christmas? As you may have noticed, the Advent Wreath is pictured on all the plaques to integrate it with the story.

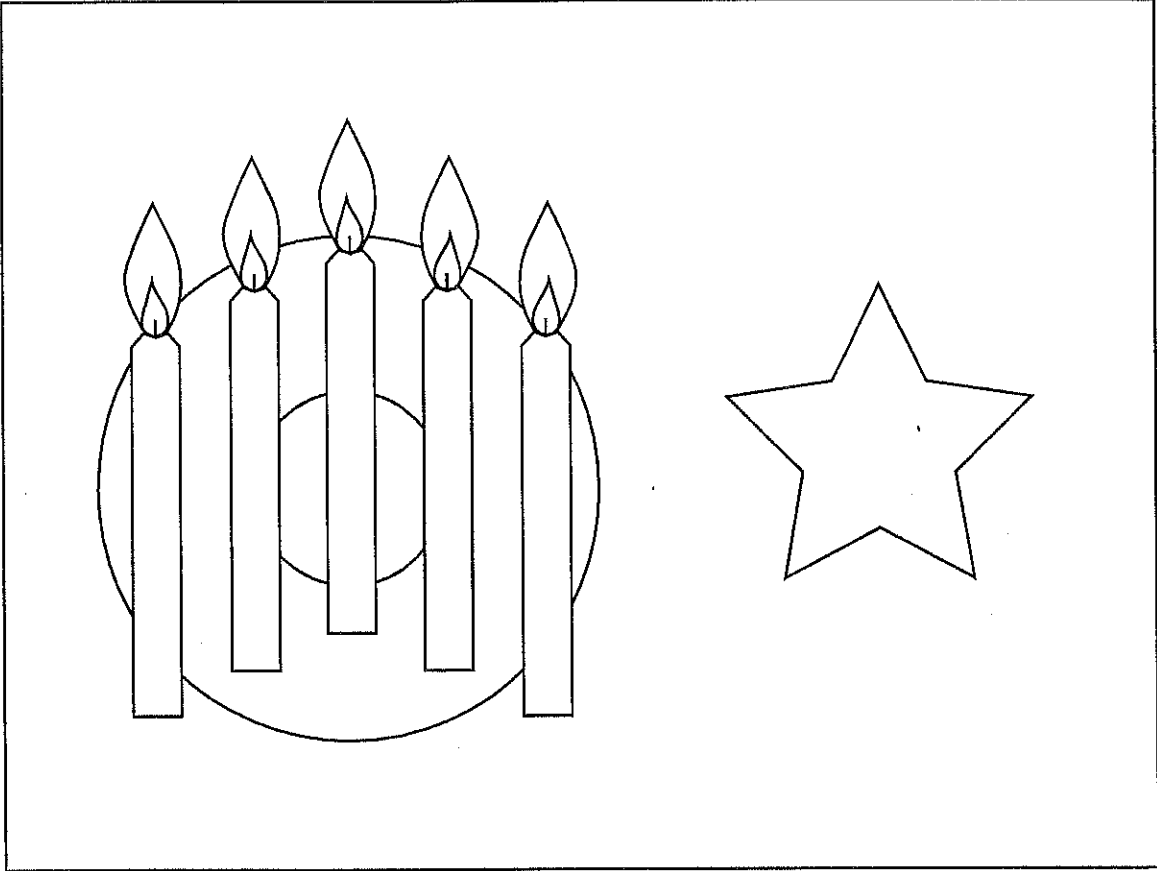
After the lid is placed on the box, the leader might say, "Now it is time to light the Advent Wreath." As you light the appropriate candle, thoughtfully say its name, such as "Today we light the candle of the prophets." After the candle for the day is lit, you say "Amen" to show the celebration is over. Come back later to extinguish the fire after the people have left the room.

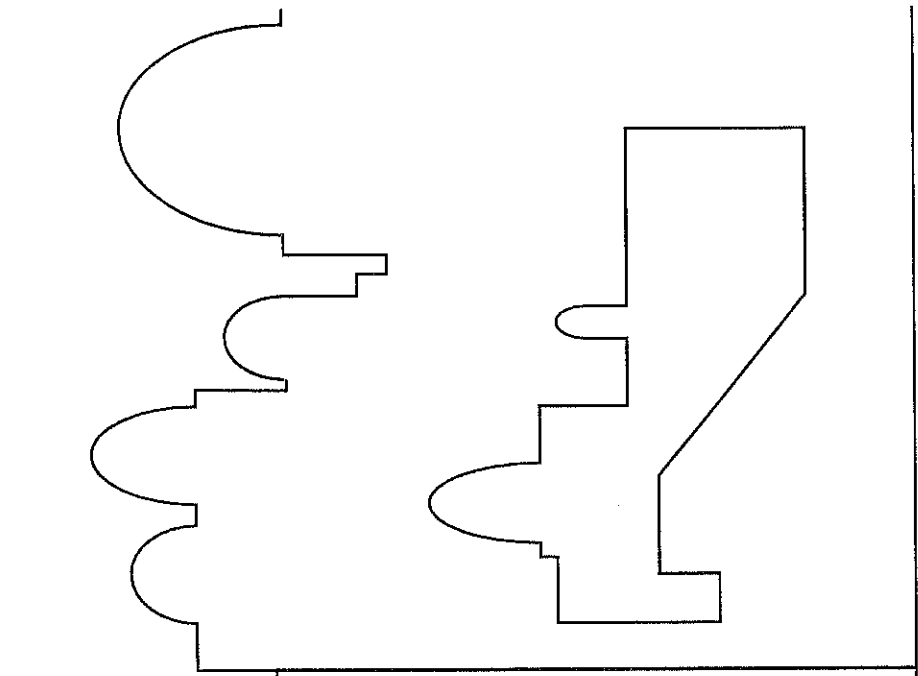
Conclusion

Be easy on yourself as you "story" Christmas. The script and the objects will help your family and you weave together God's story and your family's

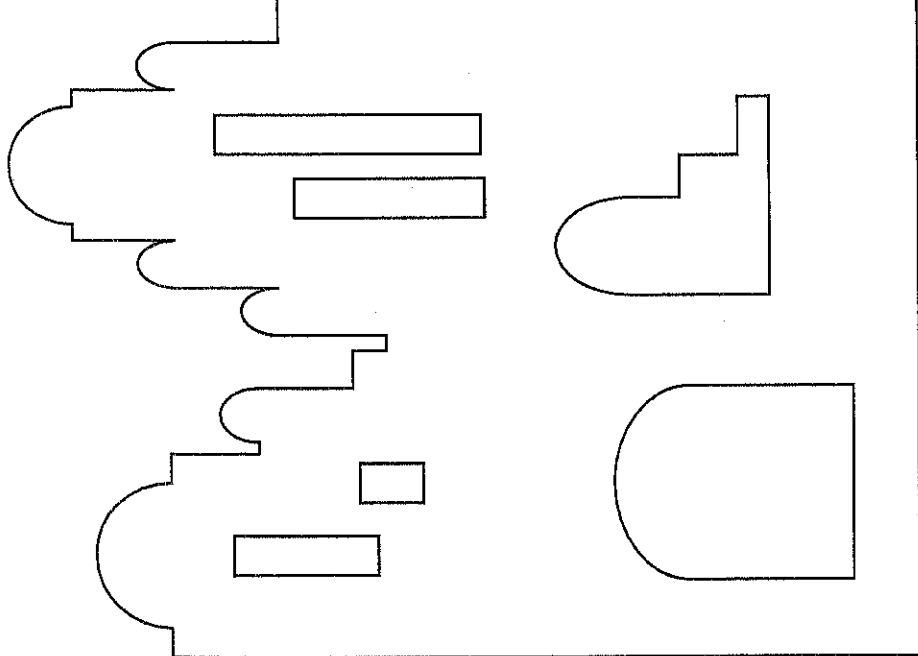




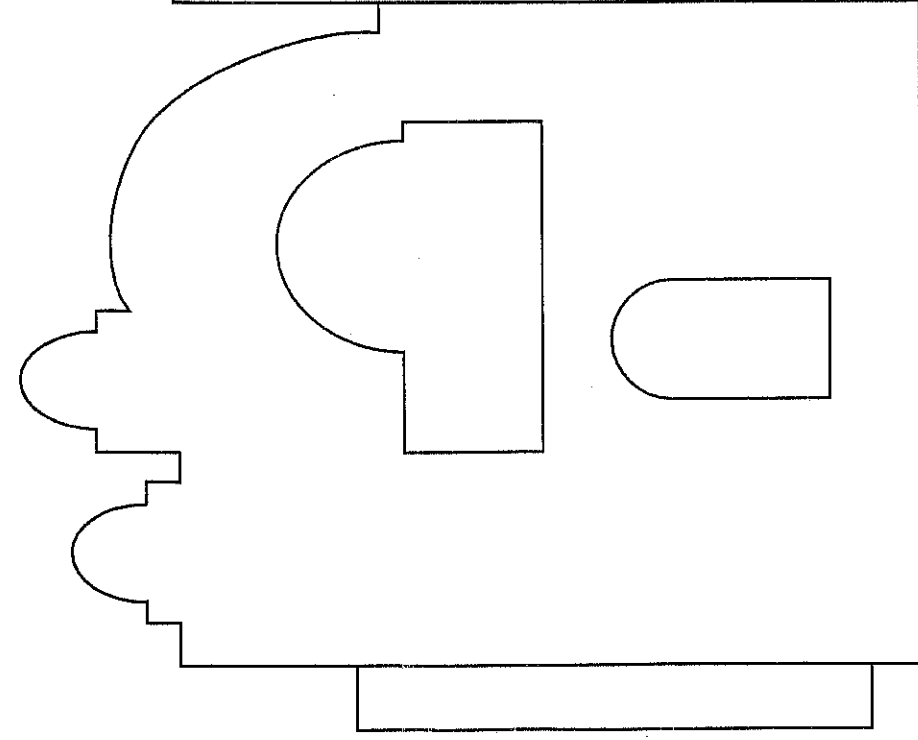




Fold Line



Fold Line



Fold Line