

WEEK ONE

Supplies:

- Bible

- Sacred Candle & Matches/Lighter

WELCOMING GOD:

Gather together, and welcome God into this time and space through the lighting of a candle. Take this moment to pause briefly and sit quietly in this light for a few moments allowing time for everyone to relax their body, mind, and spirit for this time. In these moments, the invitation is to become aware of God's presence with and amongst you as a family.

SHARING WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER:

Say: "If anything is on our minds that makes it difficult for us to focus, let's share it now and then let it go."

- Whoever leads this portion might share what is on his or her mind to model this. Give time for each person to respond. When everyone has responded that would like to, invite everyone to place their hands out and lift them up as we give these distractions to God.

OR you can invite the family to pray together as one person leads, saying the following:

"Dear Loving God, The One who knows our hearts, celebrates our victories, grieves with us during our losses, and gives us the strength to overcome our challenges. Please help us to let go of the distractions we name now, so that we can openly share with our family and may encounter you in a special way today. Our distractions are... (let there be silence here, so everyone has an opportunity to name aloud what is distracting them).

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen."

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

Read aloud: Isaiah 9:2-6

- Take turns reading the Scripture or have a different family member read the Scripture each week.

Isaiah 9:2-6

“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. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

ENCOUNTERING EACH OTHER:

Activity: Choose one person to read the scripture above again—slowly and intentionally. Everyone else should close their eyes and listen while it is being read. Try to imagine the words. The one rule to this is: everyone who is not reading must keep their eyes closed!

Once the reader finishes, everyone can open their eyes.

Say: This week, we begin Advent. Advent means “arrival” or “coming.” It’s a season in our church when we celebrate the “arrival” of Christmas—the arrival of Jesus. And, before we celebrate Jesus coming, we have to wait—on Jesus to arrive! This is what our scripture is about today. Just like we sat in the darkness waiting on the Scripture to be read, the people also had to wait. They were not able to see the future or even understand what was really happening in the moment. They had to wait for their hope to become reality. Like them, we have to wait sometimes, too. The great light that shined on them was hope—the hope that Jesus was coming. As we begin Advent at White’s Chapel, what do we hope Jesus will do for us? How will we wait? Share the answers to these questions with each other.

Discussion Questions:

- What was it like sitting in the “darkness”?
- How did it feel waiting on the person to finish reading to open your eyes? Were you bored? Frustrated? Nervous?
- Can you share about a time when you had to wait on something you really wanted? What did you feel like while you were waiting for it?
- What did you do while you waited?
- Describe what happened when you opened your eyes again. Was your vision blurry? Was the light too bright at first?
- How did it feel when you opened your eyes? What does it feel like to see?

ENCOUNTERING GOD TOGETHER:

Say: “May we pray together as a family...

Let us share our prayers for the world: for our country and leaders, for other countries and their leaders...

Let us share our prayers for the church, ministers, and spiritual leaders...

Let us share our prayers for our teachers, first responders, friends, and others in the community...

Let us share our prayers for our family and our own specific needs...”

If you would like to record the people for whom you pray, use the next few lines to do so:

ENCOUNTERING TRANSFORMATION TOGETHER:

Pray aloud together:

God, we welcomed you here and read Your Word,
we prayed and we spent time with you,
we rested in your love for us,
and we did this all together.

Now, we promise to love one another and others as you love us.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

BLESSING ONE ANOTHER FOR OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WORLD:

Invite family members to bless one another using any of the examples below or their own blessings.

Examples:

- “I love you. God loves you. I pray God blesses you.”
- “God loves you exactly like you are—and so do I.”
- “I love the gifts God has given you and how you bless the world with them.”