

PARISH EVENT KIT

Gather for Advent



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By Denise Rice, Mark Zimmermann, Emily Coppersmith, Carol Geisler and Sally Beck. Cover design: Jamie Wyatt. © 2020 Creative Communications for the Parish, 1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026. 800-325-9414. www.creativecommunications.com. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. Purchase of this kit gives the purchaser the copyright release to use the material in any format for use in the event.

Gather for Advent

Introduction

Think of this Advent event as a one day, every member Vacation Bible School in early December and make it big or small—to fit your congregation's needs. Invite families, singles, teens, seniors and everyone else in your church for a day of fun to prepare for the Savior—with craft activities (lots of crafts!), Bible stories, songs, games, snacks, and devotions.

The event could also be an outreach activity. Write an article for the local paper, deliver invitations or door hangers around the neighborhood and invite your unchurched neighbors.

You could also combine the event with a gift market that we are calling Gabriel's Gift Shop. One kind of gift market is only for the children and features items under \$3. Another gift fair that has gained popularity in recent years is a "fair trade fair" that supports Christian craftspeople from developing nations around the world.

No matter which idea or combination of ideas works for your church, this event is an opportunity to tell once again the story of God's great Christmas gift for us in his Son, our Savior.

Gather for Advent

Planning Suggestions

"Gather for Advent" will become a beloved event in your church. It can be a simple event or as elaborate as you would like. This event will help fill people with excitement for the coming of God's Son using fun and meaningful activities.

You will need:

- a director
- an arts and crafts leader and assistants
- supervisor/teacher for young children
- Gabriel's Gift Shop chairman and assistants
- service project coordinator
- games coordinator
- devotions/worship coordinator
- food coordinator and committee
- publicity chairperson
- registrar

Some roles overlap, and it's easy for one person to assume more than one role, if necessary, or to ask for helpers when needed. Or you may want to ask various groups in your church if they wish to be in charge of different activities. Perhaps the Ladies Guild could provide food, or your youth group could lead games.

Your church has its own unique leadership and organizational style and may easily plan this event without the organizational suggestions that follow, or you may find the suggestions helpful. They are offered only as suggestions to facilitate the day's activities.

Event Director

The director will ask for volunteers and assign them to leadership roles. Reading through the job descriptions that follow and helping each volunteer find his or her best fit is important. Delegating tasks and communicating frequently with the various leaders are essential for the director, too. The director ultimately is the one who makes sure everything works and is the best person to schedule the day's activities. A suggested schedule is included in this kit, but the director will want to mold the schedule to the church's particular needs.

Arts and Crafts Leader

The craft leader will ask volunteers to serve as teachers of the various crafts and activities. This kit contains many craft ideas that are primarily intended as gifts for the children to make and give to others. The creative people of your church will also have their own favorite art and craft ideas that they can teach the children. If the craft teachers plan to use the ideas in this book, they should read the directions as early as possible because some projects require extra time to gather supplies. They should also notice that a lot of the crafts require the same kinds of materials, so it is wise to make bulk purchases wherever possible. The supplies are all found in craft supply stores, supermarkets or office supply stores. The teachers will also need to determine which crafts will work best with which ages. Some crafts will be appropriate for all ages; some are limited to certain age groups. Parents accompanying their children will help with crafts that are difficult for younger children, so the age designations will have some flexibility.

One easy organizational strategy for crafts is to designate various craft "stations" at tables in your church fellowship hall with one craft teacher in charge of each station. That means each teacher is responsible for purchasing, assembling and preparing the materials and teaching the craft. You might want to give the families and other participants a roll of tickets with which to move around the craft area freely and "spend" on crafts of their choosing. Or you may want a more structured plan, allowing 20-minute periods per activity with families staying together, so moms and dads can help the younger children. Lots of flexibility during the craft time is necessary since children of different ages will be doing many different activities all at the same time. Note: Some of the projects are a little more costly than others, so you might consider charging for those.

Supervisor/Teacher of Young Children

You might want to have a supervisor/teacher of young children on duty throughout the event. Although many crafts and activities will appeal to the youngest members of your church, they may need a rest time and a few quiet activities in a separate area.

Gabriel's Gift Shop Chairman

The Gabriel's Gift Shop chairman and helpers have a big job, but one that is fun and rewarding. A gift market with lots of inexpensive items for children to purchase for friends and family members is a practical addition to the Advent event.

Sometimes local merchants are willing to donate items that make perfect inexpensive gifts. Some churches choose to ask for donations from congregational members. The best suggestions we can give are to have all gifts priced at \$1 and to only allow children up to age 10 be allowed to shop.

Many churches have also discovered "fair trade fairs"—an excellent mission activity for your church and fun for a family Advent event, as well. Briefly, a "fair trade fair" features beautiful handmade gift items made by Christian crafts people from developing countries around the world, and the items are sold at a price that respects the work of the artisans. This event can also feature coffee, tea and cocoa, also sold at prices that are fair for farmers. To find out more about a fair trade fair, contact Ten Thousand Villages at (877) 289-3247 or at www.tenthousandvillages.com

Whichever route you take, there are small touches you can do to make the Gift Shop special.

- Consider asking your junior high youth to help with this event. Make them "angels" by giving them garland halos to wear. They can lead the younger children through the shop, encouraging and helping them as they shop for loved ones.
- Ask for donations of gift wrap, ribbons, bows, and tags. Then have volunteer "elves" and other adults help the children wrap and tag their gifts.
- Put everything in "shopping" bags with the shopper's name on them and give them a card reminding them to pick up the bag when leaving. (Or send them to coat check.)

An example of what a flyer for a Gabriel's Gift Shop could look like appears on the next page. You can use it as a template for creating your own.

Gabriel's Gift Shop

SAT., DECEMBER 1ST
8:00-10:00 AM



WHERE CHILDREN CAN SAFELY & AFFORDABLY DO THEIR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

GIFT DONATIONS NEEDED

New or LIKE-new gifts are requested for moms, dads, grandmas and grandpas. For example:

- Re-gifted items • Trinkets • Jewelry • Purses
- Home décor • Scarves • Hats • Christmas items
- Ornaments • Sports items • Tools • Golf balls
- Ties • Mugs • Movie tickets • Picture frames
- Soaps & bath items • Personalized items that say "Mom," "Dad," "Grandma," etc.

all gifts \$1.00

DONATION DROP-OFF

We're collecting gifts now!
Please bring items to the red marked bins at church or school.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We're looking for Gift Shop Helpers, Shopping Angels, and Gift Wrappers. Please join us - we would love to hand you a halo!

AT THE GIFT SHOP

Our "Angel Helpers" will serve as shopping buddies for children, especially younger ones, as they browse for treasures for loved ones. Children will leave with all gifts wrapped, tagged and ready to place under the Christmas tree!

PARENTS

Please bring your mobile phone. If entry lines become long, we will take your number and call/text you to return at a convenient shopping time. So

we have plenty of gifts for all children, we kindly request children limit their shopping list to parents, grandparents, and/or caregivers. As children shop, please enjoy a cup of coffee and fellowship with other families in our Parent

Waiting Area, located right outside the Gift Shop.

WRAPPING CHOICES

After shopping, your child may have gifts wrapped while they wait, or leave them with our giftwrappers and you can be on your way to other activities. Just stop back and pick up your wrapped gifts at the end of your morning.

Service Project Coordinator

This person will organize a project with any organization or with the community to provide help to those in need through the work of the children present at the event. More detailed suggestions on what service projects to offer are provided in the Service Projects section of this kit.

Games Coordinator

The game person will be in charge of games. They should have volunteers assisting them in this.

Devotion/Worship Leader

The whole purpose of your event is learning more about God's Son, Jesus. Make sure that everyone takes part in your worship and devotional offerings. Ideas are in the kit.

Food Coordinator

The food coordinator has options. If you do this on a Saturday morning, perhaps they provide breakfast and snacks. If this is a Friday or Saturday evening event, dinner and snacks. Ideas are provided.

Publicity Chairperson

The publicity chairperson is the person who will inform and create enthusiasm among the church members and the community to make your "Gather for Advent" event a success. Door hangers, bulletin inserts, photos and articles for the local paper, and posters for the church building are some of the publicity possibilities. The publicity chairperson's imagination will supply others.

Registrar

In order to anticipate the number of people attending your event, the registrar will develop a system for preregistering participants and for recording their attendance on the day of the event. The craft teachers and food chairman will be eager to know the estimated attendance so that their purchases will be adequate. The registrar should work with the publicity chairperson to include registration forms and instructions in the publicity. The church secretary, who will receive phone registrations, should also be included in this planning.

Other Considerations

- Are you charging for this event, and how much will you charge?
- Consider having a “coat” check at registration. When children finish a craft, rather than going back for it, the craft can be sent to “coat check” and all items are collected there at the end of the event. (This includes the shopping done at Gabriel's Gift Shop.)
- Consider asking Adult Choir members to walk around singing Christmas carols to help set the mood.
- Find a “petting zoo” with live farm animals reminiscent of the nativity to come. Have adults dressed as shepherds and heralds at the zoo speaking in character and discussing what it was like on Christmas Eve.
- Do you have a large church nativity? If so, have photos taken professionally there. If not, consider opening your sanctuary and setting up photos there.
- A sample of a decree is included on the next page for you to use as a template. Someone could be standing at check-in as the town crier, or you could print a decree like this and post it for all to see.

By order of his Royal Majesty, Emperor Caesar Augustus

It Is Decreed
that all the world be counted and taxed.



Therefore, let each person and every family come for
"Breakfast in Bethlehem" to be counted according to law.

A warm breakfast will be available in the open market.

Each family of Bethlehem shall register in the open market
for the purpose of taxation as well as instruction
for beginning your journey.

Other destinations include visiting various stations:

Gabriel's Gift Shop

family fun

A Shepherd's flock

Puppet Show

Christmas Craft

Serve Our King

Cookie Walk

Those found disobeying this law to appear will be sentenced
to a holiday season without the true spirit of Christmas.

So let it be written. So let it be done.

Possible Schedule for Your Advent Event

A Saturday in late November or early December

2 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

2 p.m.

Opening litany and object lessons

2:30 p.m.

Activities and games

3:45 p.m.

Snack

4:00 p.m.

Activities and games

5:15 p.m.

Mini dramas and prayer

5:45 p.m.

Dinner

Gather for Advent

Service Projects

A central part of the Advent Event is a service project component to share the love of our Lord and Savior born in Bethlehem with the community. The service project coordinator will involve the families in a variety of service projects that apply to Advent. Choose to do any or all of the suggestions given in this section.

Blessing Bags

Create Blessing Bags for those in need. Blessing Bags are gallon-sized zipper baggies filled with various items for the homeless or elderly. They are comprised of items such as (but not limited to): socks, gloves, protein bars, crackers, beef jerky, a bottle of water, hand sanitizer, toothbrush, toothpaste, hairbrush, hand-written notes, prayer cards, etc.

It is important to keep at least one Blessing Bag in your vehicle. As you see impoverished individuals, who often request money, offer them a Blessing Bag instead.

To build on the concept of offering HOPE to your community through food and personal care item as a church, consider going bigger!

Blessings Box: Little Free Pantry

Did you know...

- According to the USDA's latest Household Food Insecurity in the United States report, more than 37 million people in the United States struggled with hunger in 2018.*
- Due to effects of the coronavirus pandemic, more than 54 million people may experience food insecurity in 2020, including a potential 18 million children.*
- Households with children are more likely to experience food insecurity. In 2018, more than 11 million children lived in food-insecure households.*
- Every community in the country is home to families who struggle with food insecurity, including rural and suburban communities.*
- Many households that experience food insecurity do not qualify for federal nutrition programs and need to rely on their local food banks and other hunger relief organizations for support.*

**feedingamerica.org*

- Individuals cannot purchase vitamins, medicines, prepared foods (hot foods), cleaning supplies, paper products (paper towels, toilet paper), cosmetics, pet food or hygiene products (deodorant, shampoo, feminine hygiene products, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc.) with federal assistance programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).**

***fns.usda.gov*

How can a church community help?

Ever drive through a neighborhood and see a cute little box with free books for kids? The idea is the same, except a Little Free Pantry is filled with non-perishable food staples, personal products, paper products, even pet food!

According to the website littlefreepantry.org, "the Little Free Food Pantry movement activates neighbors to engagement of food insecurity." The concept is simple, "Give What You Can. Take What You Need. Whether a need for food or a need to give, mini pantries help neighbors feed neighbors, nourishing neighborhoods."

