



Follow The Star: Advent Calendar **Daily activities for children and their families**

These daily activities are designed for children and their families using either the printed [Follow the Star Advent Calendar](#) or the Church of England online calendar available via www.cofe.io/AdventCalendar. A version of this daily Advent challenge for all ages – with a short daily reflection – is also available via the Follow the Star app. Find out more at www.cofe.io/JoinTheSong.

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1 December Darkness

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
In the beginning there was nothing, just **darkness** (that's it),
with nothing and no **one**, not even a nit!*

Read Genesis 1.1-2

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”

Think and Do

Our world is so full of beauty, but the Bible reminds us that before God's creation the earth was blank, formless and empty.

Spend a bit of time in silence and in darkness, or make the room darker than it normally is. Before this month gets very busy, start together by thinking about what 'nothing' is like and be still and quiet for a moment.

Pray

Dear God, thank you for your wonderful creation which fills the world. Remind us that you are always with us, in darkness and in light. Amen.

Follow

Each time you turn off a light, remember that this whole story begins with the world in darkness.



2 December Light

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
Then God filled the world with goodness and **light**
and **two** people to care for it and to choose right.*

Read Genesis 1.27-28

“So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ ”

Think and Do

God created light but also things which need light – including people and plants – and things which reflect light – like the moon.

Write a note of encouragement for the people you live with to reflect God’s light today. Use a sticky-note or blu-tac to attach the note to a mirror or another reflective surface in your home.

Pray

Dear God, thank you for the gift of light. Help us to remember to be the light and to reflect your light to others. Amen.

Follow

Look up at the night sky and find the moon. Think about the sun shining on the other side of the world and that light being reflected back at you by the moon.



3 December Promise (Dove)

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
The people got things wrong and God sent a flood,
but Noah and his **three** sons shared a **promise** to make good.*

Read Genesis 8.10-12; 9.12-19

"Noah waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth ..."

Think and Do

Today is day three of December and of our Advent countdown. Noah and his three sons went onto the ark as a way of God saving the good in the world from a flood.

Can you think of some things which come in threes? Are there any examples of this from the Bible you can think of? Ecclesiastes 4.12 is one Bible verse which reminds us that a cord of three strands is not easily broken. Consider promises you have made, kept or broken.

Pray

Dear God, thank you for your promise and for the sign of a dove we have to remember that promise. Help us to join with you in keeping the promise to make the world a good place to be. Amen.

Follow

Join together three pieces of string or wool as you consider God's promise and its strength.



4 December Door

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
We hear from a prophet on day number **four**:
His vision of God's plan opened the **door**.*

Read *Isaiah 9.6*

“For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Think and Do

A prophet is someone who received messages from God and wrote down or told others what God said – often about things which were going to happen in the future.

Write down a message about the future, perhaps something you are hoping for in the next year or something you think might change. Place it in an envelope and put it somewhere safe to open up some time in 2024.

Pray

Dear God, help us to listen to the words of the prophets who tell good news about your plan for the world. We pray for those whose voices are not heard or valued. Amen.

Follow

Next time you open an envelope – perhaps of a Christmas card – think about Isaiah's amazing vision for the future.



5 December Angel

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
Five hundred years later the plan starts to unfold
when an **angel** called Gabriel had a message to be told.*

Read *Luke 1.26-28*

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' "

Think and Do

We know that the angel here must be an important part of the story because he has a name – Gabriel, which means 'man of God'.

Write your own name on a piece of paper and decorate it. Maybe you can try and find out something about what your name means and include that too.

Pray

Dear God, Gabriel was sent by you to deliver an important message. Help us to discover messages you have for us and to play our part as Gabriel did. Amen.

Follow

What part might you have to play in God's story? Add your thoughts to your decorated name.



6 December Mary

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
It was month number **six** in the town of Nazareth
when **Mary** heard the news she was going to give birth*

Read **Luke 1.30-33**

“The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ ”

Think and Do

Mary said ‘yes’ to doing God’s will. But she must have worried about how her life was going to be turned upside-down.

Go for a walk today and notice the ups and downs, twists and turns along the way. Think or talk with someone about things in your life which are a bit like that and maybe talk to God about them too.

Pray

Dear God, when we are worried and when we are trusting, be with us. When we are struggling or when we are striding, walk with us. Amen.

Follow

Find a picture of Mary – maybe a Christmas card – and write, on the back of it, any worries or struggles you might have, remembering how Mary felt.



7 December Star

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
One evening round then (perhaps just after **seven**)
A bright new **star** appeared, shining in the heavens.*

Read **Matthew 2.7**

“Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.”

Think and Do

Sometimes we might feel like each day is the same, but God is always doing something new.

Look around on your day today and see if you can spot something new in your local area. Perhaps something which has suddenly appeared – a new bench or some yarn bombing for Christmas. If nothing new has appeared perhaps you could add something and see if other people notice.

Pray

Dear God, help us to notice what you are doing today. Give us the joy of being surprised when we see you at work. Amen.

Follow

Tonight around 7pm (or just before your bedtime) go and have a look at the night sky and see what stars you can spot.



8 December Joseph

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
Back in Nazareth Mary told **Joseph** the news
after **eight** hours dreaming he would know what to choose.*

Read **Matthew 1.18-21**

“Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ ”

Think and Do

Joseph has to make a difficult decision in today’s reading, and he finds help in his dream of an angel. Can you think of a time when you did have help to make a difficult decision? What was it that helped you?

Draw around your hand and write something on each finger about someone or something which can help you when you have a difficult decision to make.

Pray

Dear God, when things are worrying or difficult help us to trust in you. When we don’t know what to choose, help us to listen to you. When we need someone to guide us, help us to draw close to you. Amen.

Follow

Whenever you have a choice to make today – what to eat or what to wear – remember the choice Joseph made.



9 December Bethlehem

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
Nine months on they were ready to greet Jesus
But had a long ride to **Bethlehem** because of a census.*

Read **Luke 2.1-4**

“In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.”

Think and Do

Did you know that Bethlehem means ‘House of Bread’? Because of this, one Christmas tradition is to carve a ‘house’ out of a loaf of bread by hollowing it out and creating doors and windows.

See if you can make or draw this today. It could be a new Christmas tradition for your household!

Pray

Dear God, you come to us in the humble and the simple. Remind us to always be grateful for what we have and to see your amazing presence in the ordinary things of life. Amen.

Follow

In the ordinary, everyday things of today (things you normally use or do without thinking) remember God using simple, humble things to bring love and joy and peace to the world.



10 December Innkeeper

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
Ten days or so later they arrived in that city
If only an **innkeeper** on them would take pity!*

Read **Luke 2.5**

“Joseph went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.”

Think and Do

There's a wonderful quote by someone called Neal A. Maxwell who says: “Each one of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus.” Jesus is about to be born but there is no place made ready for him, although he is the Son of God, he has to be as dependent on the kindness of strangers, as we are sometimes.

Carry out a ‘random act of kindness’ today. It can be as simple as a smile or a handmade gift. You could pay for someone's coffee or lunch or invite a friend to your home for some food.

Pray

Dear God, help us to make a decision that there is room in our hearts and lives to welcome Jesus today. Amen.

Follow

Each time you have a visitor at home over the Christmas period, think about making room for Jesus.



11 December Straw

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
After knocking on more than **eleven** closed doors,
The couple found a stable where they could rest on the **straw**.*

Read **Luke 2.6**

"While they were there, the time came for Mary to deliver her child."

Think and Do

Mary and Joseph were finally made to feel welcome in a stable. Making people welcome is something the Bible talks about a lot. What would help you to feel welcome in a new place?

Make something which can go on your front door (or the door to the room in your home where you spend the most time) to show people they are welcome. This could be a wreath or a Christmas decoration, or just a sign to say, "Welcome". You might think of other ways to show a welcome to any visitors you might have over the Christmas period.

Pray

Dear God, look after those people who do not have a safe place to stay or are not made to feel welcome. Show us the way to welcome others. Amen.

Follow

See if you can hold a door open for someone today at home, at school or while you are out and about.



12 December Manger

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
Some time after **twelve** in the middle of the night
The baby was born and in a **manger** wrapped tight.*

Read *Luke 2.7*

“And Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

Think and Do

Here we are right in the middle of our countdown – and now, on our Advent calendar, we focus on the manger, right in the centre. So today is a good day to pause and remember Jesus who is at the heart of this Advent journey.

Stop in the middle of your day today and spend some time looking back and looking ahead. If you can't stop in the middle of the day, find a way of pausing an activity in the middle and taking a break then to reflect. Say the Lord's Prayer quietly on your own or with others. This can be a good way of placing God at the centre of each day.

Pray

Dear God, we are sorry for the times when we do not put you at the centre. Help us to turn to you and place you at the centre of our lives. Amen.

Follow

Place something in the centre of your table, bedside cabinet or somewhere else you will notice to represent Jesus.



13 December Shepherds

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
Thirteen tired **shepherds**, their work still not done
were out in their fields when a great light shone.*

Read Luke 2.8-10

“In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people ...’ ”

Think and Do

Shepherds certainly were hard workers. They did a difficult and dangerous job out on the hillsides protecting the sheep from wild animals. Why do you think they were the first people to receive news that Jesus had been born?

Make a card for someone you know who works really hard in any job to say ‘thank you’ to them and show them that they are valued.

Pray

Dear God, we pray for all those people who do difficult or dangerous jobs today. Thank you that you value them for who they are and what they do. Help us to do the same. Amen.

Follow

Make sure you say thank you to anyone who serves you today, e.g. a supermarket checkout worker, a bus driver.



14 December Angels

Follow the star, come join in the fun!

Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...

*They were outnumbered by **angels** – at least **fourteen** or so with a message for the shepherds: 'To Bethlehem - quick, go!'*

Read **Luke 2.11-14**

"The angel said to the shepherds, 'To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'"

Think and Do

This is where we get the lyrics for the song 'The First Nowell'. The word 'Nowell' comes from a Latin word for 'news' and the angels are here giving that news to the shepherds in their fields.

Look through a newspaper or online and find some pieces of good news. Find a way of sharing this good news with others – either through a text or social media, or by telling them in person. You might even have some good news of your own you could share with others.

Pray

Dear God, we pray for all of the bad news stories we hear every day. Help us to be bearers of good news and to share the news of your love with people that we meet. Amen.

Follow

Try to be a bearer of good news to others today, even by sharing simple things – 'the sun is shining', 'the kettle has just boiled', 'there is space on the sofa for you'.



15 December Animals

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
In just **fifteen** seconds they were running that way
and found the promised king amongst **animals** and hay*

Read **Luke 2.15-17**

“When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child.”

Think and Do

When a celebrity arrives somewhere and steps off a plane, there is usually a crowd of people gathered to show them a welcome. But other than Mary and Joseph, the only gathering to celebrate Jesus’ arrival was the animals in the stable.

If your favourite animal is not in the nativity scene already, find or draw a picture of your favourite animal and add it to the nativity scene. Think about how each animal might do something differently to welcome Jesus, e.g. a peacock might spread its tail feathers, a dog might fetch a stick, a cat might meow.

Pray

Dear God, help us to feel your presence with us today. Thank you that we are all different and we can respond to you in different ways. Amen.

Follow

Eat a meal in silence today – as if you were a cow slowly chewing hay – either on your own or with others and see what it feels like just to quietly contemplate as you eat. Does it help you to feel closer to God or to think about something as you eat?



16 December Sheep

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
The **shepherds** couldn't stay long to watch Jesus sleep
day **sixteen** reminds us they returned to their sheep*

Read **Luke 2.20**

“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”

Think and Do

The only gift the shepherds would have had to leave behind with Jesus would have been a lamb. It might not sound like much, but it would have been the most precious thing they had.

Can you give something away today – but not your most precious thing! Perhaps donate something to a charity shop or raise some money for a charitable cause, donate to a foodbank or give a gift to someone at church. See what it feels like to share with others.

Pray

Dear God, we are sorry for the times when we hold onto what we have and forget those in need. Help us to know that even if we have very little, we can still show love and care by sharing what we have. Amen.

Follow

Find something to say thank you for, for each 1p or 2p in your purse, money bank or in a grown-up's (ask their permission first to count them!), remembering that even small things can be worth a lot to someone.



17 December Wise men

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
Away in the east **wise men** watched each bright star beam
Were there three? We don't know! Could have been **seventeen!***

Read Matthew 2.1-4

“In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.’ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.”

Think and Do

The wise men come from a different place, far away from where Jesus was born, bringing three gifts. The wise men remind us that Jesus is for everyone. The celebration of their arrival is at Epiphany on 6 January and marks the end of Christmas.

Make your own countdown for after this Advent countdown to mark the days between Christmas and Epiphany. Come up with different things to do or make on each day.

Pray

Dear God, we thank you that Jesus is for all people from all places. Help us to keep the Christmas celebrations going as we remember that Jesus is also a gift for all time too.
Amen.

Follow

Add a star to each day of your calendar, diary or year planner up until 6 January so that you can keep following into the new year.



18 December Myrrh

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
But however many wise men there actually were
Day **eighteen** shows one of three gifts they brought – **myrrh**.*

Read Matthew 2.11

“On entering the house, the wise men saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

Think and Do

Myrrh was used to prepare the bodies of people who had died for burial. A strange gift for a baby! But it was a sign that Jesus' story would continue and he would grow up to die on a cross as part of God's plan to save the world.

Make or draw a cross today and find a way to include it as part of your decorations as you get ready for Christmas. Somewhere among all the celebration is the rest of Jesus' story.

Pray

Dear God, the cross seems like a sad sign in the Christmas celebrations. But help us to remember that both the manger and the cross are signs of your love. Amen.

Follow

Wrap up a Christmas present today and see if you can disguise it, so it looks like a strange gift inside. Or you might have a strange-shaped present you can wrap to remind you of this strange but important gift of myrrh.



19 December Camels

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
They set out on their journey, following the star
Find **nineteen** for the **camels** which carried them that far.*

Read Matthew 2.7-8

"Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' "

Think and Do

We don't often see camels in England and so today's theme is a good reminder that the Christmas story happened a long way from the UK.

Have a look online or in books at some maps of the part of the world where Jesus was born. See if you can find some key places like Nazareth and Jerusalem and some pictures of those places as well. What do they look like? Are they like how you might imagine?

Pray

Dear God, we pray for our world today and places which are important or familiar to us. We also pray for places far away and unfamiliar. Give your peace to those parts of the world where there is war or conflict. Amen.

Follow

Whenever you hear a place name mentioned today, think about these biblical places and the parts of the world where there are difficult things happening today.



20 December Stars

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
Although other **stars** also shone on that night
The star that they followed was **twenty** times more bright*

Read **Matthew 2.9**

“When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was.”

Think and Do

Today reminds us that although there was one bright, guiding star in the skies, all the other stars had a part to play, lighting the way. And without them, the new star wouldn't have stood out as so bright and wonderful. As we draw nearer to Christmas notice how you are feeling and others around you. Draw strength from when you are shining bright and find rest and quiet when your sparkle is dulled.

Create something shiny today! Use foil, glitter, shiny paper or tinsel to create a sparkly star decoration. Use it as a reminder of brightness even when you are not feeling bright and shiny.

Pray

Dear God, be with us when our sparkle doesn't shine so brightly and show us your light. Rejoice with us when we feel like the brightest star and help us to share that light with others. Amen.

Follow

Say something positive about yourself every time you see something shiny today.



21 December Gold

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
Now being king doesn't start at **twenty-one** years old
Jesus was born royal, and so the wise men brought him **gold**.*

Read Matthew 2.10-11

“On entering the house, the wise men saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

Think and Do

Gold is a precious metal. We often use it in jewellery and other special items. You win it as the best medal – if you come first in a race or event. And we also use it as a symbol of royalty, particularly for crowns. The gift of gold showed that Jesus was a king.

Find a video of King Charles' coronation in May 2023. See how there is a prayer said over the crown, recognising Jesus as king of kings, before King Charles was crowned.

Pray

Dear God, we praise you as king of Kings and Lord of lords. Help us to crown you in our hearts and in our lives today by the way we love and treat others. Amen.

Follow

Wear a hat today and when you put it on your head, think about Jesus as King of kings.



22 December Frankincense

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is coming, the countdown's begun ...
The star led them to worship right under its glow,
Frankincense on day **twenty-two** a holy child shows.*

Read Matthew 2.11-12

“On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.”

Think and Do

Incense is a kind of spice which comes in grains which are burned. The smoke and the smell both rise up. Incense has been used like this in worship for a long time as a symbol of prayers rising up to God. The wise men's gift of incense showed that Jesus would lead people to God, too.

Use some different objects to help you with prayer today. You might try something you can touch, something you can see, something you can hear, something you can smell and something you can taste.

Pray

Dear God, thank you for our five senses which help us experience the world. Help us to come close to you as we touch, see, hear, smell and taste. Amen.

Follow

When you use your sense of smell today, remember the frankincense and imagine the rich, sweet smell of smoke rising in the air.



23 December Clear (Halo)

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is close, the countdown's almost done ...
For **twenty-three** days you've been waiting patiently
And what we're celebrating will soon be **clear** to see...*

Read **John 1.5**

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

Think and Do

Have you ever worn a halo? Perhaps in a nativity play, made of tinsel? A halo in art normally shows a saint – a holy person. However, the lives of saints were usually difficult, and they went through really tough things before they were recognised for what they've done.

Look back at all the things you've done, made or remember the things you've thought about along this journey. How does it feel having waited all this time? How are you feeling about what is to come? If you could write one word about this journey we've been on together, what would it be? Find a way to share it – perhaps on social media (with parental consent) using #FollowTheStar.

Pray

Dear God, thank you for all the people who point us to you and help us to see who you really are. Help us to point the way, too. Amen.

Follow

Every time you see a signpost or something pointing you in a direction, think about the halo marking out the way to Jesus who is coming so soon!



24 December Jesus

*Follow the star, come join in the fun!
Christmas is here, the countdown is done!
Following the star leads us to sing and to pray
to Jesus who is with us **twenty-four** hours a day.*

Read John 1.14

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

Think and Do

Today we celebrate Jesus being added as the final part of the calendar and so you can welcome him into your home today. Tomorrow we will celebrate Christmas day with prayers and songs to thank God for this amazing gift and that Jesus is with us today and every day.

Celebrate this special moment! Eat a special Christmas treat, put up some final decorations or perhaps even open one small present a little bit early. Remind yourself that all these celebrations are about welcoming Jesus who is a gift for every hour of every day.

Pray

Dear God, thank you for Jesus who is with us 24/7. Help us to celebrate this special gift through prayer and song and worship. Give us gifts of your love, joy and peace in our homes this Christmas. Amen.

Follow

Do something each hour – sing, pray or celebrate – to remember Jesus.