

Jesse Tree Whole Family Session

Leader Guide

by Janet Schaeffler, OP

Preparations

- Schedule the time and place for this family workshop, reserving the room on the parish calendar.
- Design a flyer/handout to publicize the gathering to all families. Encourage your “regulars” to invite family members, friends, or neighbors.
- Promote the gathering on your website, in your parish bulletin, and with weekend announcements. Email your parent contact lists.
- Gather and prepare the materials needed.

Room Set-Up

- Tables for families to gather and work, as well as to place supplies.
- The “base” for the Jesse Tree: a Christmas tree, a large branch, a large paper tree on the wall, etc.
- Table for refreshments: coffee, tea, juice, or snacks.

Staff

- A catechetical leader is needed to lead the families through the conversations and activities.
- It might be helpful to have several catechists present to move around the room offering affirmation and answering questions.
- A hospitality team of three or four people can welcome the families, set up and serve refreshments, and clean up.

Materials Needed

- Family tree handout for each family
- The “base” for a Jesse Tree: a Christmas tree, a large branch, a large paper tree on the wall, etc.
- A Bible for each family
- 3x5 cards, each listing an Old Testament person, the corresponding Scripture reference, and a possible symbol to represent them. Choose from the options on the handout.
- “People and Events” handout, which gives a brief summary of each person, the corresponding Scripture passages, and suggested symbols
- Heavy card stock for the base of the ornaments (enough for two for each family: one for the Jesse Tree ornament and one for their family ornament)
- Scissors, glue, pencils
- A hole puncher
- Yarn for stringing through the holes in the index cards to hang them
- Crayons and/or markers
- Assorted felt and material
- Construction paper
- Ribbons, buttons
- Optionally provide the “At-Home Handout” so families can make a full set of ornaments for their own home. Be sure to print them single-sided so they can cut and color the pictures.

Part One: Your Family Tree

Begin the activity with the following introduction to the content:

- You're here today with your family. What's exciting and wonderful about belonging to a family is that our families are much bigger than just the people who are with us today.
- You wouldn't be here today if there weren't many people who came before you. Let's think of some of them just for a moment.

Give to each family a handout of a blank family tree. Explain to the families briefly how the family tree works. Have your floating catechists available to help them get started.

- For right now, begin to fill in names: mom and dad, sisters and brothers, grandparents, etc. You won't have time to fill in a complete family tree, but you can take this handout home to add more names later.

Part Two: Jesus' Family Tree

- We're now in the season of the year the Church calls Advent. One of the things we do during Advent is to remember how the world waited for Jesus to come.
 - We think about all the people in Jesus' family
 - All the people who came before him
 - All the people who prepared the world for him
 - All the people in his family who were waiting for him to come
 - The promise (covenant) that God made with these people
- One of the ways we do this during Advent is by making a Jesse Tree
 - A Jesse Tree helps us remember and celebrate Jesus' family tree
 - Really, too, it's our family tree, because we belong to the same family that Jesus did
- Because Advent and Christmas celebrates Jesus' coming into our world, the Jesse Tree looks at Jesus' family - his grandparents, his great-grandparents, his great-great-grandparents and so on.
 - There was an Old Testament person named Jesse. Jesse was the son of Obed and the grandson of Ruth and of Boaz. He lived in Bethlehem and was of the Tribe of Judah; he was a farmer, breeder, and owner of sheep. Jesse is important in Judaism because he was the father of the most famous king of Israel.
 - Jesse had a son named David who was chosen by God to serve as king of Israel. David was the first member of a new royal family which ruled over Israel for many years.
 - Many years after Jesus lived, St. Matthew and St. Luke said that Jesus was born into this royal family. They wrote that Jesse, David, and their children and grandchildren were ancestors of Jesus.
- Often, then, during Advent, people make what we now call "Jesse Trees" in order to:
 - look at some of these ancestors of Jesus
 - learn more about them
 - read the Scripture stories about them
- Flowing from the Scripture stories, people think of symbols which would represent the various persons. These symbols are made into ornaments and placed on the Jesse Tree.
- For example, think of someone in your family tree. If your grandfather loves to garden, a symbol for him might be a plant. If your aunt is a librarian, a symbol for her might be a stack of books.

Part Three: Our Parish Family Tree

- Let's make a Jesse Tree for our parish. It will be kept in _____ (e.g. the church gathering space, the hallway of our parish meeting areas, etc.). This will help other parishioners during this Advent season to learn about some of the people who prepared the world for Jesus' coming.
- Each family will make an ornament for one Biblical ancestor. At home you might want to make your own tree and make several ornaments.

Give each family one 3" x 5" card which tells them which person they will be working with. You may also wish to give them the handout which gives a short summary of the lives of the people.

Have on the tables: a Bible for each family, heavy card stock to use as the base of the ornament, scissors, and glue.

The other materials to use for the ornament can be placed on a table(s) in the room so that families can choose what they want to use to create their ornament. Have the families look up the scripture reference for their character and read the story about them. The leader and any helpers may need to move throughout the room to help families locate the scripture passages in their Bibles. After they read the story, instruct them to draw/color/create a symbol together for that particular Bible character on the 3"x 5" card. Have them punch a hole in the top of their index card, loop a piece of yarn through it and tie it so the card can be hung on the Jesse tree.

Part Four: Your Family Ornament

- We, too, are part of Jesus' family tree.
- We'd like each family to help by adding another ornament to the Jesse Tree which symbolizes your family. Start by taking a few moments and think about our own family:
 - What do we believe in?
 - What do we like to do together?
 - Who are we as followers of Jesus?
 - What makes our family special?
- Let's take a few moments to talk about these questions with our family members who are here.

Pause for conversations.

- With those thoughts in your minds and hearts, what "symbol" might tell something about your family?

Pause for conversations.

- Let's take some time now to make ornaments which symbolize your families.

Give each family a second piece of card stock. They can use whichever materials they would like to decorate the ornament.

Part Five: Closing Prayer

Note: If some of the persons listed weren't included in the making of ornaments, delete the section about them from this prayer service.

Leader: Advent is a time of waiting. Knowing that Jesus is always with us, we remind ourselves to wait for the many ways of his coming.

Advent is a time of hope. We hope and work for the fulfillment of the God's promises.

Advent is a time of prayer. We pray that the coming of Christ will make a difference in our lives so that by our words and actions, all will know that Christ is always near.

We have gathered to celebrate the ancestors of Jesus who waited for the coming of the Messiah, the one who was promised by decorating this Jesse Tree.

All: Jesse and David are among the ancestors of Jesus who waited for the coming of the Messiah. As we decorate our Jesse Tree with symbols of these people we remember that we too, wait, pray, and live as part of Jesus' family.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for creation and Adam and Eve to place them on the tree.*

God planted a garden and placed there the man and woman whom he had formed.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Noah to place them on the tree.*

God told Noah to build an ark. God made a new promise with Noah about how God would care for all people.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Abraham and Sarah to place them on the tree.*

God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation. Abraham and Sarah's son, Isaac, was a surprise gift from God.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Isaac and Rebekah to place them on the tree.*

Many people remind us that the love story between Isaac and Rebekah is a reminder of the love of God toward God's people.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Jacob, Rachel and Leah to place them on the tree.*

Jacob and Rachel's and Leah's sons became leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel from which Jesus came.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Joseph to place them on the tree.*

Joseph's father, Israel, had a colorful coat made for him. Joseph's brothers were jealous of this attention and so they sold him into slavery. Even though his brothers did a terrible, in the end Joseph forgave them and Jacob and his sons took their families to Egypt to be with Joseph.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invites those with symbols for Shiprah and Puah to place them on the tree.*

Shiprah and Puah were brave midwives who put their lives at risk by defying the pharaoh's law of death in order to obey God's law of life.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Jochebed, Miriam and Moses to place them on the tree.*

Jochebed was the mother of Moses; Miriam was Moses' sister. Moses led the Israelites out of the land of Egypt and the house of slavery.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Joshua and Rahab to place them on the tree.*

Joshua led the Hebrew people in conquering the land of Canaan. Rahab hid the spies that Joshua sent to Jericho in her inn. In Jericho, as the men marched around the city for seven days, Joshua had the priests carry the ark of the Lord, blowing trumpets.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Deborah to place them on the tree.*

Deborah, a prophet and ruler of the people of Israel, was the only woman among the twelve judges, and she brought the nation of Israel 40 years of peace because of her faith-filled leadership.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Naomi and Ruth to place them on the tree.*

After much hardship, Ruth sacrificed the chance to be with her own people and went with Naomi because she came to believe in Naomi's God, the God of Israel. The story of Naomi and Ruth is one of deep love and friendship, courage, self-sacrifice, and faithfulness.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Hannah and Samuel to place them on the tree.*

In her prayer, Hannah never doubted God. Hannah gave birth to Samuel and gave him to the Lord, just as she promised she would. The prophet Samuel was an honest and fair judge, delivering God's law with fairness.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Jesse and David to place them on the tree.*

Jesse's youngest son was the most famous King of Israel, David. David was a shepherd until the prophet Samuel anointed him. In one of his songs, David describes God as a rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn, stronghold, and refuge. David was victorious in battles because he trusted in God for the victory, not himself.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Huldah and Esther to place them on the tree.*

Huldah's word as a prophet was accepted by everyone as coming from God. Esther, queen of Persia, saved the Jewish people from a plot to have the Jews destroyed.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Isaiah and Jeremiah to place them on the tree.*

Isaiah and Jeremiah were important prophets in Old Testament times. Isaiah spoke of an ideal world when "Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them." Jeremiah taught that the people could not faithfully pray if they oppressed the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Daniel to place them on the tree.*

God entrusted Daniel with the ability to understand and interpret dreams and visions. Daniel's faithfulness to God landed him in a lion's den, where his enemies were sure he would be killed. But God sent an angel that "shut the lions' mouths" (Daniel 6:22), and Daniel was miraculously spared.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Elizabeth, Zechariah, and John the Baptist to place them on the tree.*

Zechariah and Elizabeth were the parents of John the Baptist. John, the cousin of Jesus, became a well-known preacher who prepared the way for Jesus. He asked people to repent, to always be prepared for God; he baptized people who wanted to be ready for the Lord to come.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invites those with symbols for Mary and Joseph to place them on the tree.*

The angel Gabriel told Mary that she was going to have a baby by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. Mary was engaged to a man named Joseph of the house of David. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant he was troubled until he found out that she was to be the mother of Jesus.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for Jesus to place them on the tree.*

Jesus became human, became one of us to teach us about God's unconditional love, to show us how to live and love as humans on our journey with God.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for the shepherds to place them on the tree.*

Shepherds, watching their sheep one night, were interrupted by angels telling them of good news – a savior had been born for them.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

Leader: *Invite those with symbols for the wise men to place them on the tree.*

Wise men from the east arrived to find the newborn King and they presented him with gifts. Having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went home by another way.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

At this point, the families can be invited to place their family-ornament on the tree. (Or you may wish to have them take them home with them after the workshop.) If they place them on the tree, they can be invited to take them off on the Fourth Sunday of Advent and take them home for their tree; or you could take them off and they could pick them up from you.

Leader: God of love, from the dawn of the creation you formed a people in strength and wisdom. You blessed them with leaders and prophets, men and women of holiness who trusted in your promises and longed for your coming. We praise and thank you for seeing the needs of your people and preparing them for the coming of Jesus, their Savior.

Gracious God, bless this Jesse tree as a sign of our membership in your family of faith, as a sign of our gratitude for all those who prepared a way for us, as a sign of our longing to be one with you now and always. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Continuation at Home

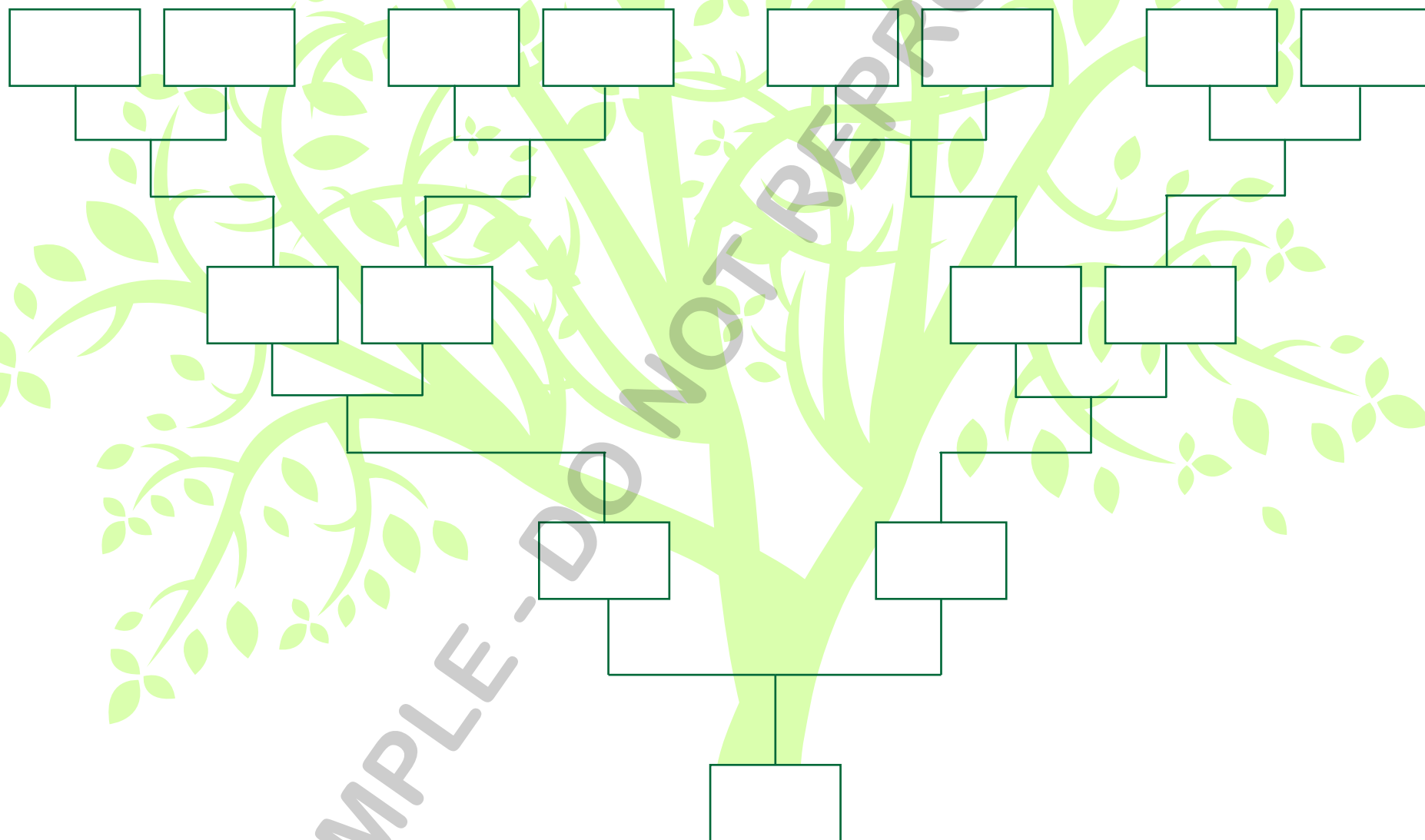
Rather than having this Advent tradition be just a one-time event (participating in this workshop), invite the families to make a Jesse Tree for their homes, remembering one of the people/happenings in God's family each day of Advent.

The handout for family use can be given to each family (or placed on your parish website) for the families to download.

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

Family Tree

Start with the youngest family member(s) at the bottom of the page. Add extra boxes on the same line for siblings or spouses.



People and Events of the Jesse Tree



1. Creation: world (Genesis 2:8-9)

God planted a garden and placed the man and woman whom he had formed there. Then God made various trees that were beautiful to look at and good for food. In the

middle of the garden was the Tree of Life, the tree of good and bad.



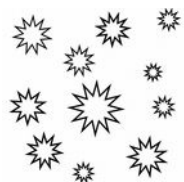
2. Adam and Eve: apple (Genesis 3:1-7)

Adam and Eve chose not to listen to God so they were driven out of the Garden of Eden.



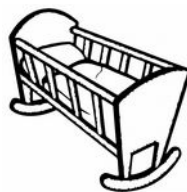
3. Noah: rainbow (Genesis 9:12-17)

God told Noah to build an ark. God made a new promise to Noah about how God would care for all people and gave the rainbow as a symbol of this promise.



4. Abraham: stars in night sky (Genesis 22:17-18)

Abraham obeyed God and left his country. God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation and his descendants would be more numerous than the stars in the sky.



5. Sarah: cradle (Genesis 21:1-8)

Abraham's wife, Sarah, gave birth to a son, Isaac, in her old age. Because this birth was a surprise, Sarah said, "God has given me cause to laugh, and all who hear of it will laugh with me." Isaac's name means "laughter" in Hebrew.



6. Isaac: ram (Genesis 22:1-19)

God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, but after Isaac was placed on an altar, the angel of God stopped Abraham from killing him. Then Abraham saw a ram caught in some nearby bushes and sacrificed the ram instead.



7. Rebekah: well (Genesis 24:10-20)

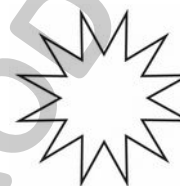
Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac. The servant prayed that the right girl would not only offer him a drink of water from the well, but offer to water his ten camels, too. Rebekah came out with her water jar and did exactly that! She agreed to go back with the servant and she became Isaac's wife. Rebekah modeled generosity to a stranger.



8. Jacob: ladder (Genesis 28:10-22)

Abraham's grandson Jacob dreamed about a ladder where he met God. In the dream, God confirmed the covenant that the ancestors of Abraham and Isaac would be as plentiful as the dust on the ground and would spread from east to west. Later Jacob became

the father of 12 sons who were leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel.



9. Leah and Rachel: 12-pointed star (Genesis 29:15-20)

Leah and Rachel were mothers of the 12 sons who became leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus was descended from them.



10. Joseph: colorful coat (Genesis 37:1-36)

Joseph's father, Jacob, had a colorful coat made for him but Joseph's brothers were jealous of this attention so they sold him into slavery. Even though his brothers did this, in the end Joseph forgave them and Jacob and his sons took their families to Egypt to be with Joseph. Joseph teaches us the power of forgiveness.



11. Shiphrah and Puah: babies (Exodus 1:14-22)

Shiphrah and Puah were brave midwives who put their lives at risk by defying the pharaoh's law of death in order to obey God's law of life. Shiphrah and Puah were committed to life.



12. Jochebed: basket (Exodus 2:1-10; Exodus 6:20; Numbers 26:5)

Jochebed was the mother of Moses, who had faith in God's protection of her baby. Because she trusted God, she could give up her son rather than see him killed. She knew that God would take care of her child.



13. Miriam: tambourine (Exodus 2:1-10; 15:20-21; Numbers 20:1-13)

Miriam was the older sister of Aaron and Moses. As an adult, Miriam is given the title of prophetess. She led the song and dance of victory after Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea parted.



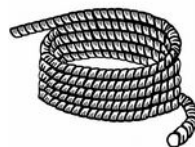
14. Moses: Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:5-6; Exodus 34:10-11, 27-28)

God gave Moses the ten commandments, making a covenant where God promised to make the Israelites his treasured possession among all people if they followed God's commandments. Moses led the Israelites out of the land of Egypt where they were slaves.



15. Joshua: trumpet (Joshua 1:1-9; 6:1-15)

Joshua became the leader of the Israelite tribes after the death of Moses. He led the Hebrew people in conquering the land of Canaan. In Jericho, as the men marched around the city for seven days, Joshua had the priests carry the ark of the Lord, blowing trumpets.



16. Rahab: red cord (Joshua 2:1-21)

Joshua secretly sent two spies to scout out the fortified city of Jericho. Rahab ran an inn built on the Jericho city wall where she hid the spies on her roof top. Rahab did this because she

had heard about the God of Israel and recognized him as the true God.



17. Deborah: tent peg and mallet (Judges 4:4-9; 5)

Deborah was a prophet and ruler of the people of ancient Israel, the only woman among the twelve judges. She held court under the Palm Tree of Deborah in the hill country of Ephraim, deciding the people's disputes. The godly leadership of Deborah brought the nation of Israel 40 years of peace.



18. Ruth and Naomi: wheat (The Book of Ruth)

Naomi and Ruth suffered terrible misfortune: the men in their family, including both their husbands, died. When Naomi decided to return to her home, Ruth sacrificed the chance to be with her own people and went with Naomi because she came to believe in Naomi's God, the God of Israel. Ruth and Naomi showed us the power of deep love and friendship, living with courage, self-sacrifice, and faithfulness.



19. Hannah: red heart with praying hands (1 Samuel 1-2)

Even though Hannah remained childless for many years, she never stopped praying. She had faith that God had the power to help her. Eventually, Hannah gave birth to Samuel and gave him to the Lord, just as she promised she would.



20. Samuel: lamp (1 Samuel 3:1-21)

Samuel was an honest and fair judge, delivering God's law with fairness. As a prophet, he urged Israel to serve God alone rather than other gods. Despite his personal misgivings, he led Israel from the system of judges to its first monarchy.



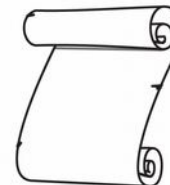
21. Jesse: shepherd's staff (1 Samuel 16:1-13)

Jesse, the son of Obed and the grandson of Ruth and of Boaz, lived in Bethlehem and was of the Tribe of Judah. He was a farmer, breeder, and owner of sheep. Jesse's youngest son was the most famous King of Israel, David.



22. David: harp (1 Samuel 16:17-23)

David, the son of Jesse, was a shepherd until the prophet Samuel anointed him. He is credited with a heartfelt song of faith in God for God's protection (2 Samuel 22). In this song, David describes God as a rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn, stronghold, and refuge.



23. Huldah: scroll (2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chronicles 34:22-28)

One of the few women or men labeled a prophet, Huldah was consulted, rather than Jeremiah, when the lost book of the law was found. Her word was accepted by everyone as coming from God. She is the patron of women theologians.



24. Esther: purple robe with stars
(The Book of Esther)

Esther, a Jewish Queen of Persia, saved the Jewish people from a plot by the wicked Haman, who tried to have the Jews destroyed.

This story began the Jewish festival of Purim. Esther teaches us how to discover God's presence when God seems to be absent.



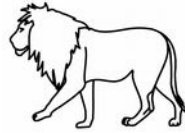
25. Isaiah: lion and lamb
(Isaiah 11:1-9)

Isaiah is perhaps the most important prophet in Old Testament times. Amid urging the people to repent, he also told of a bright future with the coming Messiah. He speaks of an ideal world when "The wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them."



26. Jeremiah: tears (Jeremiah 7)

Jeremiah was a major prophet, often referred to as the weeping prophet. Jeremiah teaches that the people cannot pray faithfully if they continue to oppress the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows. He called the people to act justly toward one another. Jeremiah reminds us – especially through his tears – of the closeness of our God.



27. Daniel: lion (Daniel 6:17-24)

Daniel's faithfulness to God landed him in a lion's den, where his enemies were sure he would be killed. But God sent an angel that "shut the lions' mouths" (Daniel 6:22), and Daniel was miraculously spared.



28. Elizabeth and Zechariah: pencil and tablet (Luke 1:39-63)

Zechariah, a priest and Elizabeth, his wife, were the parents of John the Baptist. Zechariah was made mute until after John was born, when Elizabeth said he would be called John. When Elizabeth's relatives objected, Zechariah wrote "His name is John" and suddenly he could speak again and began blessing and praising God.



29. John the Baptist: sandals
(Mark 1:1-11)

John, the cousin of Jesus, became a well-known preacher who prepared the way for Jesus. He asked people to repent, to always be prepared for God; he baptized people who wanted to be ready for the Lord to come. John was a strong and serious witness for Jesus.



30. Mary: lily (Luke 1:26-38)

The angel Gabriel told Mary that she was going to have a baby by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. Mary said yes to God, bringing Jesus to our world.



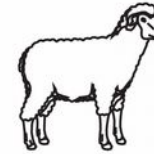
31. Joseph: saw (Matthew 1:18-25)

Mary was engaged to Joseph of the house of David. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he was troubled until he found out that she was to be the mother of Jesus.



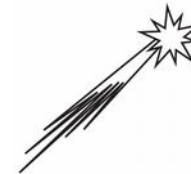
32. Jesus: Greek letters Chi-Rho
(Luke 2)

Jesus became human to teach us about God's unconditional love, to show us how to live and love as humans on our journey with God.



33. Shepherds: sheep (Luke 2:8-20)

Shepherds watching their sheep one night were interrupted by angels telling them of good news – a savior had been born for them. The shepherds paid attention to an interruption in their lives, an interruption which told them more about God's love.



34. Wise Men: star (Matthew 2:12)

Wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem to find the newborn King and presented him with gifts. Having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod they went home by another way. The wise men remind us to give God the gifts of our lives.

The Jesse Tree

The Jesse Tree is named for an Old Testament person named Jesse. Jesse had a son named David who was chosen by God to serve as king of Israel. David was the first member of a new royal family which ruled over Israel for many years.

Many years after Jesus lived, St. Matthew and St. Luke said that Jesus was born into this royal family. They wrote that Jesse, David, and their children and grandchildren were ancestors of Jesus. These ancestors, plus all the holy women and men of the Old Testament who came before them, who inspired them, make up the spiritual background of Jesus. All of them are part of Jesus' family tree. Isaiah the prophet called it a Jesse Tree when he wrote, "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots."

When we make a Jesse Tree, we remember the family of Jesse and all those people through history who helped prepared the world for the coming of Jesus.

Materials Needed:

- Jesse Tree (small Christmas tree, branch, paper tree on the wall, etc.)
- This handout
- Handout of Jesse Tree ornaments
- Crayons, markers
- Bible

Directions:

- During this Advent season, perhaps as you light the candles of your Advent Wreath, pause a few moments to remember the people and happenings which are part of Jesus' family tree.
- Listed here are more people/happenings in Jesus' family tree than you will need for the days of Advent. (The number of the days of Advent is different from year to year; some years you will need more than others for the given days of Advent.) Choose those which your family is interested in and would like to reflect on during this Advent season. You may also choose to use the last ones (the people of the Nativity story) during the days following December 25th, continuing your reflection throughout the days of Christmas.
- Each day you might wish to color the ornament for the day and place it on your tree during your prayer. (You may also wish to make your own ornaments, using felt, ribbons, sparkles, etc.) If time is short and you do not have time to color the ornaments, simply take time to recall the person in your prayer using the following pages.



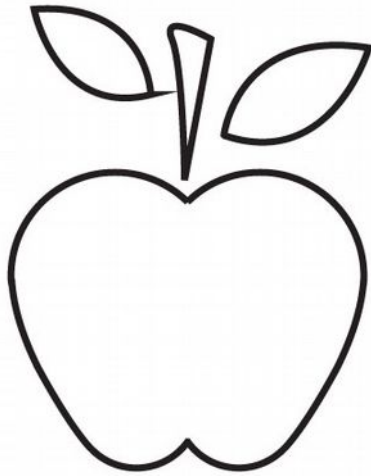
1. Creation: world

(Genesis 2:8-9)

Reader: God planted a garden and placed the man and woman whom he had formed there. Then God made various trees that were beautiful to look at and good for food. In the middle of the garden was the Tree of Life, the tree of good and bad.

Leader: Thank you, God, for giving us all good things.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

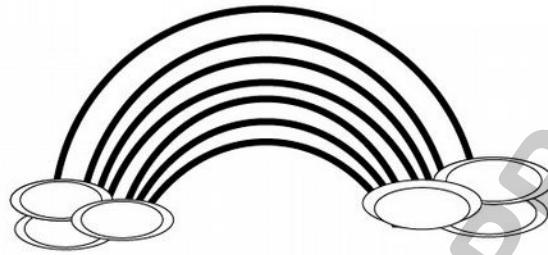


2. Adam and Eve: apple
(Genesis 3:1-7)

Reader: Adam and Eve chose not to listen to God so they were driven out of the Garden of Eden.

Leader: Thank you, God, for your overwhelming love.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

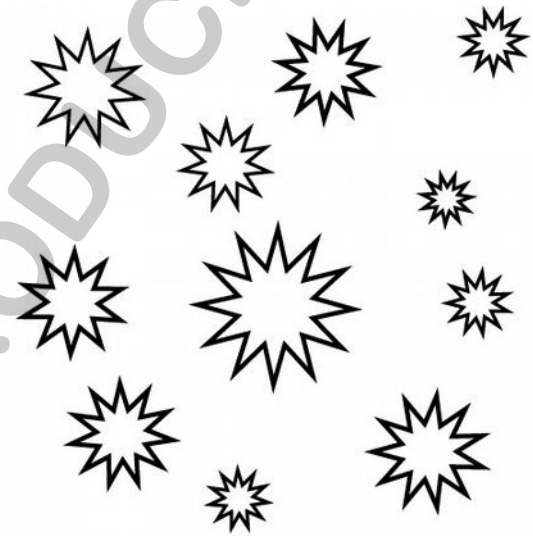


3. Noah: rainbow
(Genesis 9:12-17)

Reader: God told Noah to build an ark. God made a new promise to Noah about how God would care for all people and gave the rainbow as a symbol of this promise.

Leader: Thank you God, for your extravagant promises of care.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

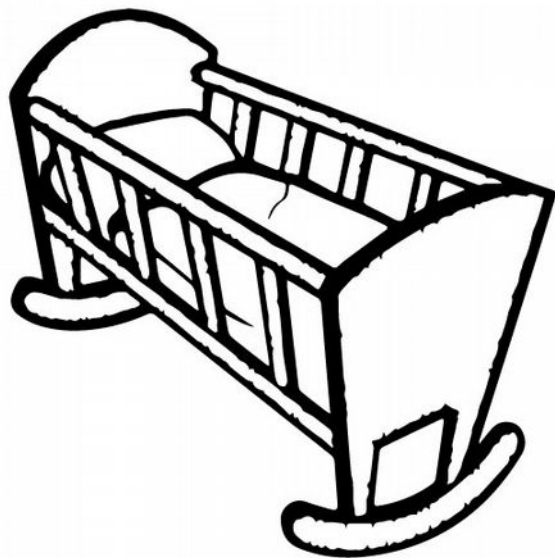


4. Abraham: stars in night sky
(Genesis 22:17-18)

Reader: Abraham obeyed God and left his country. God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation and his descendants would be more numerous than the stars in the sky.

Leader: Thank you, Abraham, for your example of obedience to God's call.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



5. Sarah: cradle
(Genesis 21:1-8)

Reader: Abraham's wife, Sarah, gave birth to a son, Isaac, in her old age. Because this birth was a surprise, Sarah said, "God has given me cause to laugh, and all who hear of it will laugh with me." Isaac's name means "laughter" in Hebrew.

Leader: Thank you, Sarah, for teaching us about the God of Surprises.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



6. Isaac: ram
(Genesis 22:1-19)

Reader: God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, but after Isaac was placed on an altar, the angel of God stopped Abraham from killing him. Then Abraham saw a ram caught in some nearby bushes and sacrificed the ram instead.

Leader: Thank you, Isaac, for your faith in God and trust in your father.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



7. Rebekah: well
(Genesis 24:10-20)

Reader: Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac. The servant prayed that the right girl would not only offer him a drink of water from the well, but offer to water his ten camels, too. Rebekah came out with her water jar and did exactly that! She agreed to go back with the servant and she became Isaac's wife. Rebekah modeled generosity to a stranger.

Leader: Thank you, Rebekah, for your generosity to a stranger.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

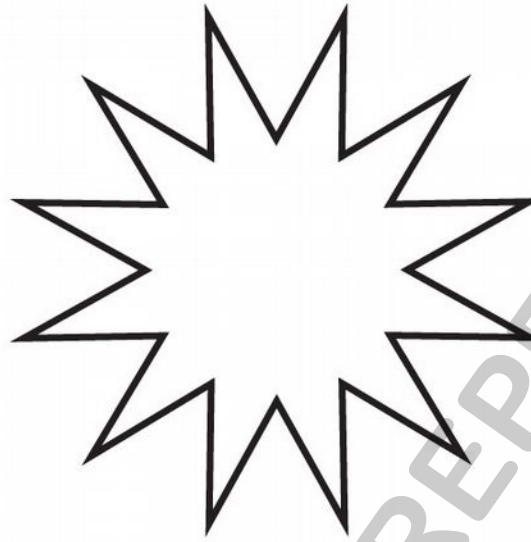


8. Jacob: ladder
(Genesis 28:10-22)

Reader: Abraham's grandson Jacob dreamed about a ladder where he met God. In the dream, God confirmed the covenant that the ancestors of Abraham and Isaac would be as plentiful as the dust on the ground and would spread from east to west. Later Jacob became the father of 12 sons who were leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Leader: Thank you, Jacob, for using your mind and strength, your strong faith—even in the mist of fear—to build your family.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



9. Leah and Rachel: 12-pointed star
(Genesis 29:15-20)

Reader: Leah and Rachel were mothers of the 12 sons who became leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus was descended from them.

Leader: Thank you, Rachel and Leah, for your love and care for your families.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

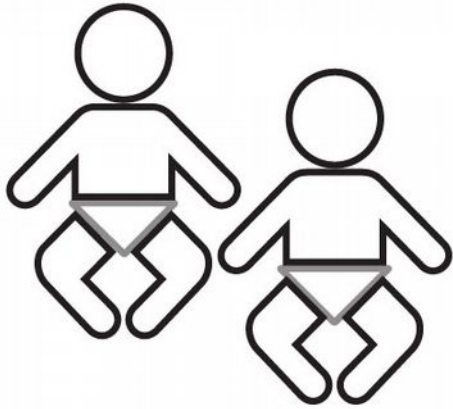


10. Joseph: colorful coat
(Genesis 37:1-36)

Reader: Joseph's father, Jacob, had a colorful coat made for him but Joseph's brothers were jealous of this attention so they sold him into slavery. Even though his brothers did this, in the end Joseph forgave them and Jacob and his sons took their families to Egypt to be with Joseph. Joseph teaches us the power of forgiveness.

Leader: Thank you, Joseph, for teaching us the power of forgiveness.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



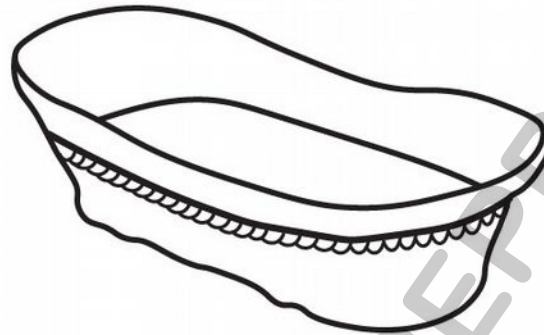
11. Shiphrah and Puah: babies

(Exodus 1:14-22)

Reader: Shiphrah and Puah were brave midwives who put their lives at risk by defying the pharaoh's law of death in order to obey God's law of life. Shiphrah and Puah were committed to life.

Leader: Thank you, Shiphrah and Puah, for your commitment to life.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



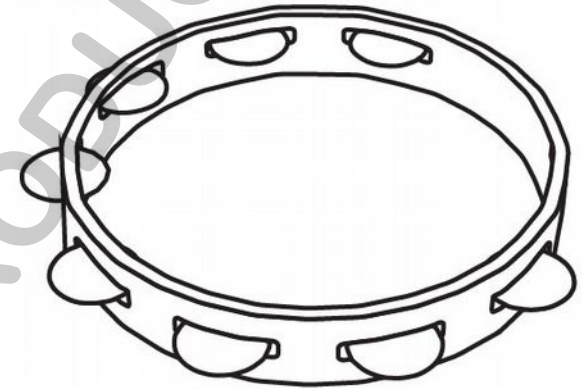
12. Jochebed: basket

(Exodus 2:1-10; Exodus 6:20; Numbers 26:5)

Reader: Jochebed was the mother of Moses, who had faith in God's protection of her baby. Because she trusted God, she could give up her son rather than see him killed. She knew that God would take care of her child.

Leader: Thank you, Jochebed, for your faith and trust in God.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



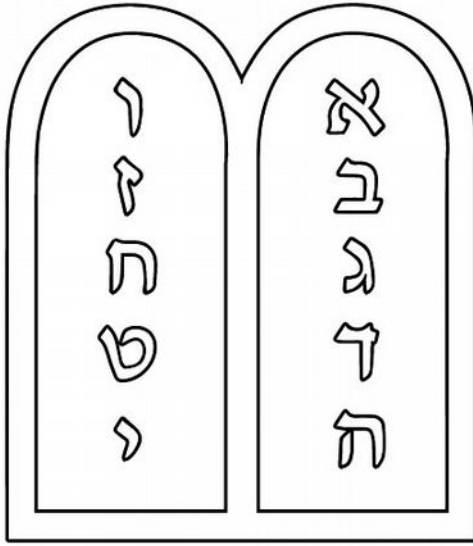
13. Miriam: tambourine

(Exodus 2:1-10; 15:20-21; Numbers 20:1-13)

Reader: Miriam was the older sister of Aaron and Moses. As an adult, Miriam is given the title of prophetess. She led the song and dance of victory after Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea parted.

Leader: Thank you, Miriam, for your creativity in saving Moses and for your praise of God.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



14. Moses: Ten Commandments

(Exodus 19:5-6; Exodus 34:10-11, 27-28)

Reader: God gave Moses the ten commandments, making a covenant where God promised to make the Israelites his treasured possession among all people if they followed God's commandments. Moses led the Israelites out of the land of Egypt where they were slaves.

Leader: Thank you, Moses, for sharing God's commandments with all of God's People.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



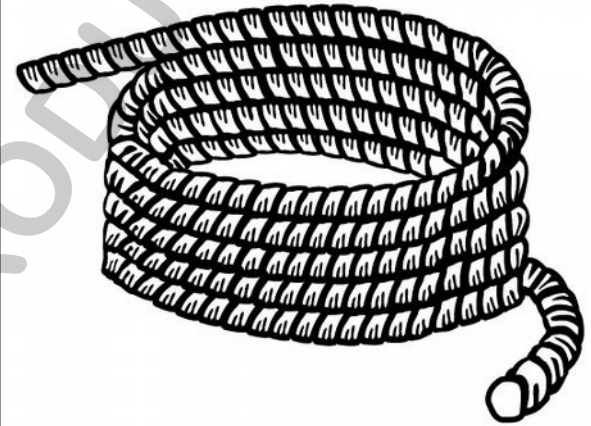
15. Joshua: trumpet

(Joshua 1:1-9; 6:1-15)

Reader: Joshua became the leader of the Israelite tribes after the death of Moses. He led the Hebrew people in conquering the land of Canaan. In Jericho, as the men marched around the city for seven days, Joshua had the priests carry the ark of the Lord, blowing trumpets.

Leader: Thank you, Joshua, for listening to God's words to you – "...be strong and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord, your God, is with you wherever you go."

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



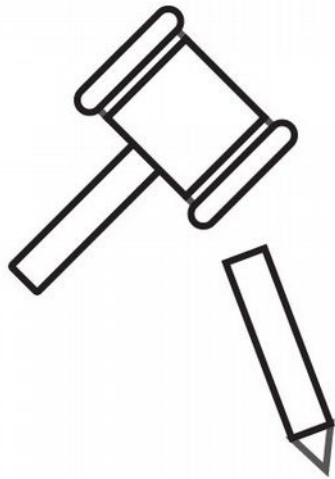
16. Rahab: red cord

(Joshua 2:1-21)

Reader: Joshua secretly sent two spies to scout out the fortified city of Jericho. Rahab ran an inn built on the Jericho city wall where she hid the spies on her roof top. Rahab did this because she had heard about the God of Israel and recognized him as the true God.

Leader: Thank you, Rahab, for recognizing the true God; for being loyal to Israel and faithful to God's word.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



17. Deborah: tent peg and mallet
(Judges 4:4-9; 5)

Reader: Deborah was a prophet and ruler of the people of ancient Israel, the only woman among the twelve judges. She held court under the Palm Tree of Deborah in the hill country of Ephraim, deciding the people's disputes. The godly leadership of Deborah brought the nation of Israel 40 years of peace.

Leader: Thank you, Deborah, for following God faithfully, acting with honesty and honor.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



18. Ruth and Naomi: wheat
(The Book of Ruth)

Reader: Naomi and Ruth suffered terrible misfortune: the men in their family, including both their husbands, died. When Naomi decided to return to her home, Ruth sacrificed the chance to be with her own people and went with Naomi because she came to believe in Naomi's God, the God of Israel. Ruth and Naomi showed us the power of deep love and friendship, living with courage, self-sacrifice, and faithfulness.

Leader: Thank you, Ruth and Naomi, for showing us the power of deep love and friendship, living with courage, self-sacrifice, and faithfulness.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

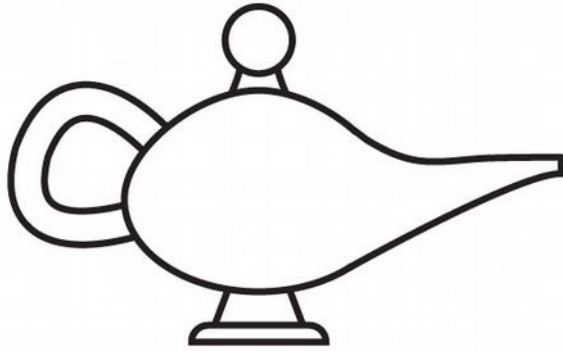


19. Hannah: red heart with praying hands
(1 Samuel 1-2)

Reader: Even though Hannah remained childless for many years, she never stopped praying. She had faith that God had the power to help her. Eventually, Hannah gave birth to Samuel and gave him to the Lord, just as she promised she would.

Leader: Thank you, Hannah, for never giving up in praying to and believing in God's care.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

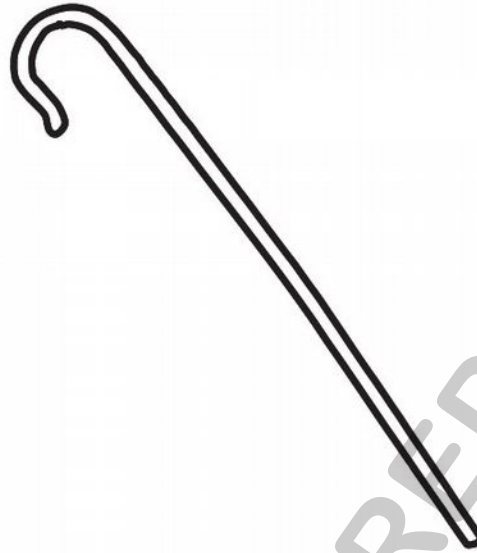


20. Samuel: lamp (1 Samuel 3:1-21)

Reader: Samuel was an honest and fair judge, delivering God's law with fairness. As a prophet, he urged Israel to serve God alone rather than other gods. Despite his personal misgivings, he led Israel from the system of judges to its first monarchy.

Leader: Thank you, Samuel, for your example of loving and obeying God without question.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

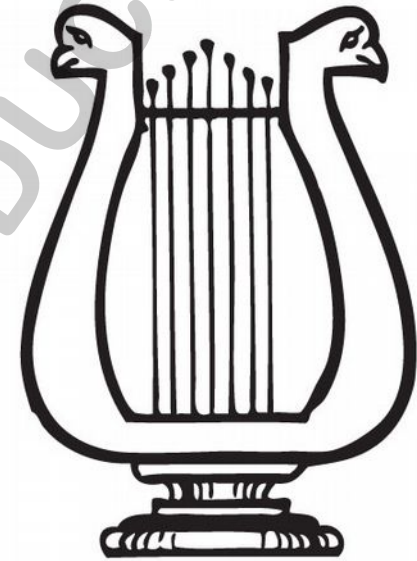


21. Jesse: shepherd's staff
(1 Samuel 16:1-13)

Reader: Jesse, the son of Obed and the grandson of Ruth and of Boaz, lived in Bethlehem and was of the Tribe of Judah. He was a farmer, breeder, and owner of sheep. Jesse's youngest son was the most famous King of Israel, David.

Leader: Thank you, Jesse, for continuing to form God's family, the ancestors and family of Jesus.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

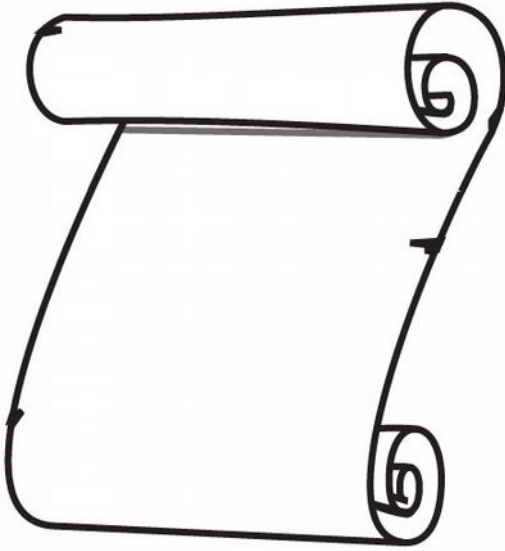


22. David: harp
(1 Samuel 16:17-23)

Reader: David, the son of Jesse, was a shepherd until the prophet Samuel anointed him. He is credited with a heartfelt song of faith in God for God's protection (2 Samuel 22). In this song, David describes God as a rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn, stronghold, and refuge.

Leader: Thank you, David, for your passionate love of God and the many psalms, prayerful hymns of praise and petition.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



23. Huldah: scroll

(2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chronicles 34:22-28)

Reader: One of the few women or men labeled a prophet, Huldah was consulted, rather than Jeremiah, when the lost book of the law was found. Her word was accepted by everyone as coming from God. She is the patron of women theologians.

Leader: Thank you, Huldah, for speaking God's Word to the people and to the rulers.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



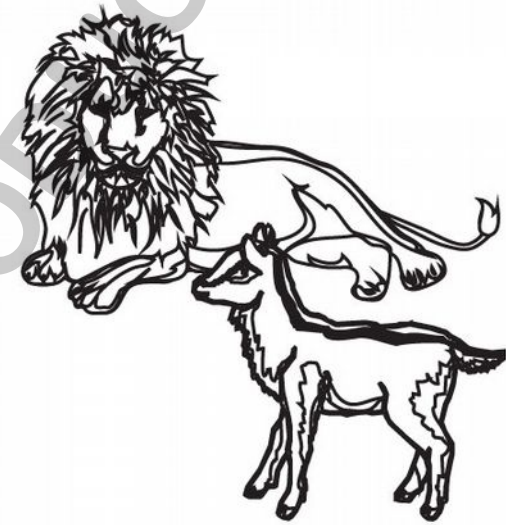
24. Esther: purple robe with stars

(The Book of Esther)

Reader: Esther, a Jewish Queen of Persia, saved the Jewish people from a plot by the wicked Haman, who tried to have the Jews destroyed. This story began the Jewish festival of Purim. Esther teaches us how to discover God's presence when God seems to be absent.

Leader: Thank you, Esther, for teaching us how to discover God's presence when God seems to be absent.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



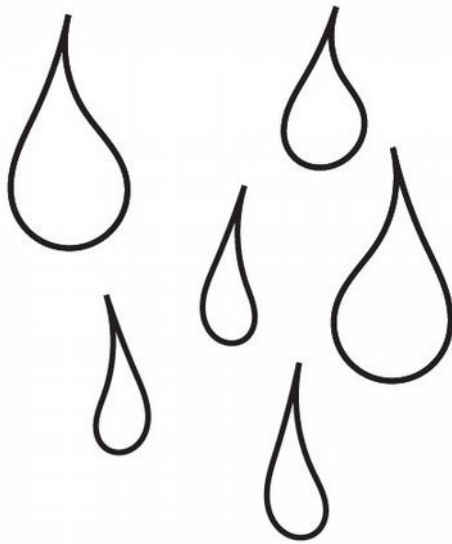
25. Isaiah: lion and lamb

(Isaiah 11:1-9)

Reader: Isaiah is perhaps the most important prophet in Old Testament times. Amid urging the people to repent, he also told of a bright future with the coming Messiah. He speaks of an ideal world when "The wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them."

Leader: Thank you, Isaiah, for listening to God, for sharing God's vision with us in beautiful words.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

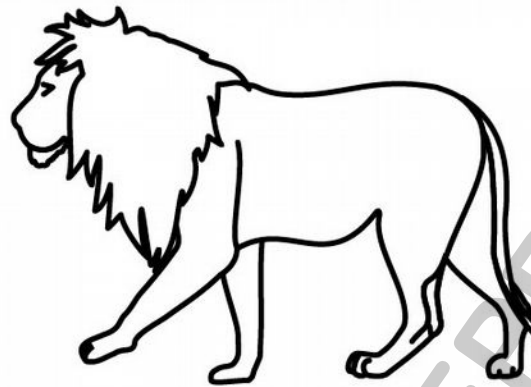


26. Jeremiah: tears
(Jeremiah 7)

Reader: Jeremiah was a major prophet, often referred to as the weeping prophet. Jeremiah teaches that the people cannot pray faithfully if they continue to oppress the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows. He called the people to act justly toward one another. Jeremiah reminds us – especially through his tears – of the closeness of our God.

Leader: Thank you, Jeremiah, for reminding us – especially through your tears and God’s tears – of the closeness of our God.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

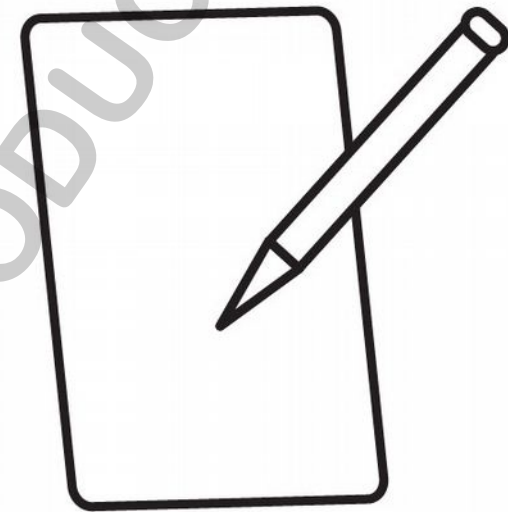


27. Daniel: lion
(Daniel 6:17-24)

Reader: Daniel’s faithfulness to God landed him in a lion’s den, where his enemies were sure he would be killed. But God sent an angel that “shut the lions’ mouths” (Daniel 6:22), and Daniel was miraculously spared.

Leader: Thank you, Daniel, for always keeping your focus on God, for always putting God first.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

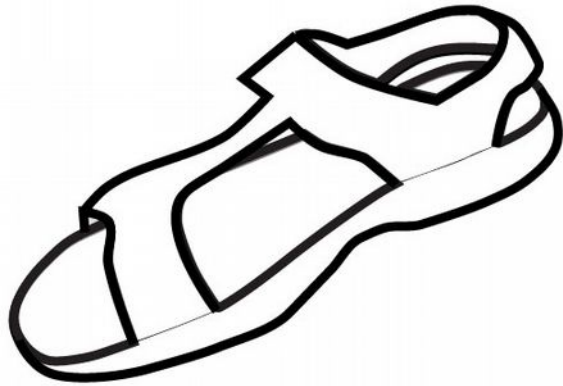


28. Elizabeth and Zechariah: pencil and tablet
(Luke 1:39-63)

Reader: Zechariah, a priest and Elizabeth, his wife, were the parents of John the Baptist. Zechariah was made mute until after John was born, when Elizabeth said he would be called John. When Elizabeth's relatives objected, Zechariah wrote “His name is John” and suddenly he could speak again and began blessing and praising God.

Leader: Thank you, Elizabeth and Zechariah, for believing in God – even when things seemed impossible.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



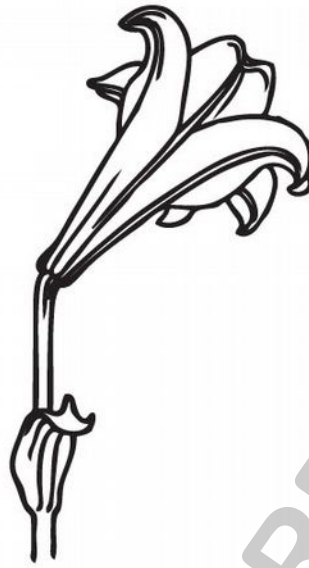
29. John the Baptist: sandals

(Mark 1:1-11)

Reader: John, the cousin of Jesus, became a well-known preacher who prepared the way for Jesus. He asked people to repent, to always be prepared for God; he baptized people who wanted to be ready for the Lord to come. John was a strong and serious witness for Jesus.

Leader: Thank you, John, for being a strong and serious witness for Jesus.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



30. Mary: lily

(Luke 1:26-38)

Reader: The angel Gabriel told Mary that she was going to have a baby by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. Mary said yes to God, bringing Jesus to our world.

Leader: Thank you, Mary, for saying yes to God, for bringing Jesus to our world.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



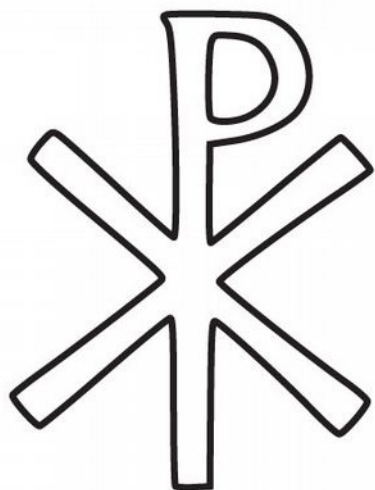
31. Joseph: saw

(Matthew 1:18-25)

Reader: Mary was engaged to Joseph of the house of David. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he was troubled until he found out that she was to be the mother of Jesus.

Leader: Thank you, Joseph, for your care and protection of Mary and Jesus.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

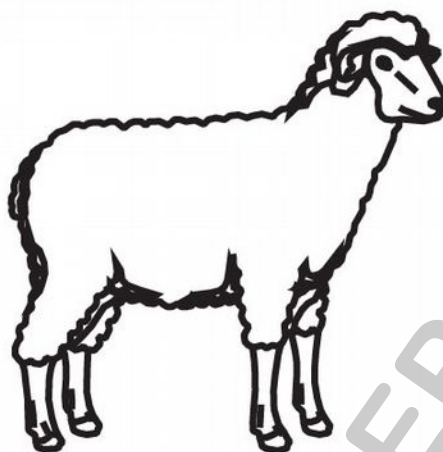


32. Jesus: Greek letters Chi-Rho
(Luke 2)

Reader: Jesus became human to teach us about God's unconditional love, to show us how to live and love as humans on our journey with God.

Leader: Thank you, Jesus, for teaching us how to bring peace and compassion to our world.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.

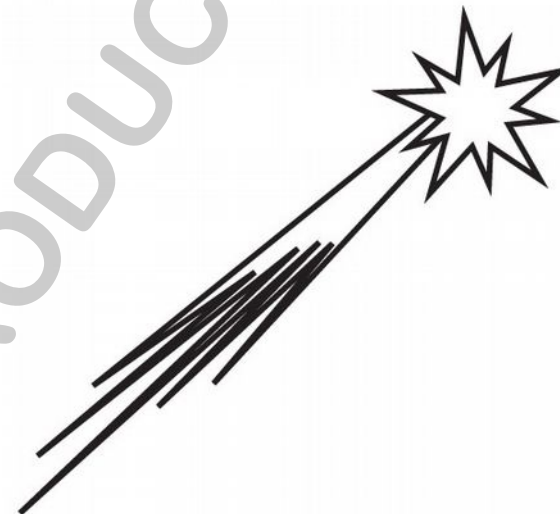


33. Shepherds: sheep
(Luke 2:8-20)

Reader: Shepherds watching their sheep one night were interrupted by angels telling them of good news – a savior had been born for them. The shepherds paid attention to an interruption in their lives, an interruption which told them more about God's love.

Leader: Thank you, shepherds, for paying attention to an interruption in your life, an interruption which told you more about God's love.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.



34. Wise Men: star (Matthew 2:12)

Reader: Wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem to find the newborn King and presented him with gifts. Having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod they went home by another way. The wise men remind us to give God the gifts of our lives.

Leader: Thank you, wise men from the east, for reminding us to give God the gifts of our lives, our kind actions for others.

All: Thank you, God, for loving the world and giving us Jesus.