

and a donkey. Print a Bingo game card for each child with rearranged images on different cards. Using either small candies or bingo tokens, have children place the item on each figure when you describe it with clues.

- Straw: "I am all golden brown, where Mary laid her baby down."
- Star: "I shined brightly in the sky over baby Jesus that first night."
- Cow: "I mooed with joy so sweet and breathed on baby Jesus' feet."
- Candle: "I have a warm, soft glow that lit that room so long ago."
- Shepherd: "I am keeper of the sheep who came to watch the baby sleep."
- Angel: "I told of Christ's birth. I shouted the message, 'Peace on Earth!'"
- Mary: "I am the mother of this baby boy. To serve God completely is my heart's greatest joy."
- Gift: "I was brought by the wise men to worship this baby born to be King."
- Donkey: "I walked a long road with Mary, the mother, as my heavy load."



3. Memories for the New Year —

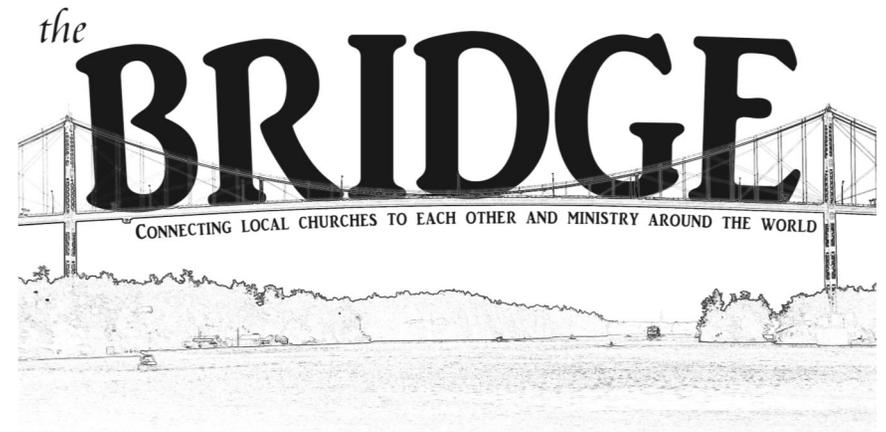
Reflect on the previous year and capture children's memories that can become part of your family and church story. Capture these on camera, draw pictures, write songs or have older children journal. Discipleship Ministries suggests some great questions, including:

- What was your favorite thing that our family did together this year?
- Who are your best friends? What do you like the most about them?
- How is Sunday school this year? What do you like most about Sunday school?
- What do you like to daydream about?
- What was your favorite thing that our church did together this year?

The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:

www.unyumc.org

View a Christmas message from Bishop Mark J. Webb at
<http://bit.ly/BishopWebbChristmas2019>



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

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Engaging in Advent calls us to task

By Sophia Agtarap, UCom

Advent: the time Christians set aside for spiritual preparation for the birth of Christ. It's a strange time. It's a time of busy-ness and movement. It's also a time of waiting.

We wait for the hope delivered at Christmas; we exercise patience; we are expectant as we count the days to Christmas Day; and we hope.

For many, waiting conjures up images



of a docile, passive condition, twiddling our thumbs, and fidgeting while we wait for something to happen.

But Advent calls us to task.

Amidst dressed-up storefronts and winter wonderlands, we find ourselves living in a reality filled with poverty, war, destruction, and racism. Though this season leading up to Christmas is characterized by waiting expectantly for the hope that arrives in the form of a

baby born in a manger — the Prince of Peace — we instead are flooded with the sense that the world is upside down, far away from peace. Families are living in fear of deportation. Refugees in the thousands are risking their lives for the chance at a better life. Young black men are unsure if a routine traffic stop will end their life.

How do we prac-

tice Advent in such a time as this? How can we wait patiently when there is so much urgency?

How do we see past the tinsel, the shiny wrapping, the Christmas songs that have been playing since October and the Black Friday specials that were announced well before Thanksgiving, to see where Light is already breaking through?

Advent is just as much a season of active waiting as it is a season of surprise. As people of faith, we live in this interesting already-but-not-yet space. Already, because we know Christ has come, and not yet, because we are still awaiting the arrival of the Kingdom of God, when peace and justice — Shalom — will reign. And yet we sometimes live as people who have forgotten about this gift of hope that came to us in the form of a baby, born to immigrants in a lowly stable.

As we engage this season of Advent, where is God showing up? It may be where you least expect it: in the unhoused person you pass by every morning asking for help, in a refugee resettled in your neighborhood, in the

angry coworker, in the family member with whom you've disagreed this entire election season, in the headlines you read weekly about violence against our brothers and sisters who are labeled as 'other.'

As you sit in this tension of a world shrouded in darkness, waiting for the light to come, stay woke. Tune your senses to the ways God is already at work. Listen with your entire being to where God's spirit is nudging you. Channel the Jesus who overturned tables and who fought the establishment on behalf of the marginalized. Allow yourself to experience both joy and despair for what you see and hear and feel around you.

Above all, don't be afraid to look for and engage in the ways God is showing up.



Celebrating Advent with children

Advent begins the Christian new year, and everyone — from the youngest to the oldest member — should celebrate. As we are in the season of Advent, consider more than the Advent calendar with a little piece of candy behind the numbered windows counting down the days until Christmas. Consider these new ideas to celebrate Advent with children.

1. Advent chain — Make an Advent chain that includes ministry activities

children can do. Make a link for each day left in Advent through Dec. 25. Symbolizing penitence and royalty, make purple links and a white link for Christmas Day. On each link, write an activity to do as a group or church or with parents or guardians. The possibilities are endless. Tailor the activities to your church's size and the needs of your community. Ideas include:

- Bake cookies for your local fire de-

partment.

- Make paper snowflakes.
- Do a good deed for your neighbor.
- Have each member of your family finish the sentence: "To me, Christmas means..."
- Read your favorite Christmas story.
- Drink cocoa from Christmas mugs.
- Make Christmas gift tags.

2. Christmas Bingo — For young non-

readers, or people who are youthful, create a Bingo board of different Christmas pictures. Make nine 1-inch squares on a word-processing document and paste a different Christmas clipart image in each square. Use a manger with straw, a star, a cow, a candle, a shepherd with sheep, an angel, Mary, a gift

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