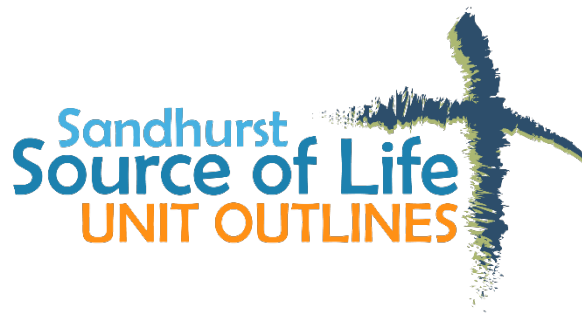


YEAR LEVEL	3 & 4
TITLE	Christmas - The Jesse Tree
STRAND	CHURCH AND TRADITION
SUGGESTED DURATION	4 weeks
ENDURING QUESTIONS	What does the Church look like in our community? How can I be like Jesus in our community?



Unit Focus

In this unit students will explore how Christmas is a fulfilment of God's promise and a time to celebrate Jesus' birth. Advent is a time of looking forward to the fulfilment of that promise. At Christmas we celebrate Jesus with us today by living lives of love and service to others.

Achievement Standards

By the end of **Year Four**:

Students identify how the Church celebrates feasts and seasons of the liturgical year.

Unit Outcomes

By the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Understand the concept of promise.
2. Recognise the liturgical season of Advent as a time to prepare for Christ's coming.
3. Identify and describe people in the Scriptures who longed for the birth of the Saviour.

Key Understandings for Students

- Promises involve a relationship between at least two parties. There are obligations on both sides.
- We make Advent promises as one way to prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus.
- God made promises with all people and God keeps these promises.
- Over the years, many people were part of the fulfillment of God's promises.
- The birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promise to be close to his people.
- At Christmas we are reminded that we can continue the work of Jesus in our world.

Student Context

As students move through this level their understanding of themselves, their community and the wider world expands. They are less self-focussed and enjoy working collaboratively. Their reasoning ability takes an important

step forward and, whilst still being very literal, they are developing the ability to understand different levels of meaning and hence appropriate symbols and symbolic actions. They have a better understanding of time and the sequence of events, therefore Scripture stories take on a new significance.

Theological Background for Teachers

- Advent is the beginning of the Church's liturgical year. Each year the Church celebrates the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus through feasts and seasons.
- During the season of Advent, we prepare for the commemoration of Christ's first coming to us.
- The Church Year begins on the first Sunday of Advent which is the Sunday nearest to 30th November.
- Advent takes its name from the Latin word meaning 'coming'. As Christians we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem.
- The idea of having a period of preparation for Christmas was probably influenced by the practice of the season of Lent leading up to Easter which began in Spain in the 5th century. Some hundreds of years later Pope St. Gregory the Great spoke about four Sundays in preparation for Christmas, and by 800 AD the four weeks of preparation before Christmas became common practice. Advent is a period of joyful and spiritual expectation of the mystery of Christ's birth.
- In Advent we live out the hope of Christ's coming and we look forward to celebrating the presence of God with us through the celebration of Christmas. We come to hear the story of the past, the promises made to the people of Israel and brought to fulfillment in the person of Jesus.
- There is an Advent custom that uses stories to develop a stronger sense of who Jesus Christ is and who the people are that pointed the way to him. The custom is called the Jesse Tree. It is the representation of Christ's family tree suggested by the prophets' words, "There shall come forth a shoot from the root of Jesse." (Isa.11:1). The Tradition is named for King David's father.
- From the very beginning of time, God has promised to be with God's people. Scripture conveys the story of the covenant established by God and brought to its fulfillment in the covenant renewed by Christ's life, death and resurrection.
- The prophet Isaiah foretells the coming birth of the Messiah (Isa 7:14). The liturgy of Advent invites us into a time of waiting that is filled with hope in the promised coming of the Messiah who will bring justice and peace.
- As Christians we celebrate the faithfulness of our God, the same God who made agreements with the people of the Old Testament. God's promise is fulfilled in the sending of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus reveals God's great love for all people. We rejoice in the coming of Christ.
- During Advent, we experience the ancient longing of God's people for a saviour. For Christians, the preparations associated with Advent are made in the light of faith that God's Kingdom has already been established and God's covenant has been fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. It is a time to focus on the presence of Christ in our lives.
- Advent and Christmas present opportunities for us to reflect on the challenge of living as true followers of Jesus

- Messiah is the Hebrew term for Christ (The Anointed One). The Old Testament taught the Jews to expect salvation to come from God in the person of a kingly Messiah.
- The one to bring salvation is also called Saviour (Healer). Joseph was told that Jesus will save His people from their sins (Mt 1:21) and the angel announced to the shepherds the birth of a Saviour who is the Messiah, the Lord (Luke 2:12).
- Mary conceived Jesus. In the Incarnation, God becomes human. Through this event humankind becomes immersed in God's presence. This doctrine is central to the whole philosophy of Christianity.
- At the feast of the Nativity, the church recalls the historical birth of Jesus. We recall the Infancy Narratives found in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. These are interpreted as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Major Assessment Task & Rubric

Students create a 2 dimensional Jesse Tree which includes a statement to reflect their meaning of the concept of 'promise'.

Students add Christmas baubles to the tree that represents:

- each of the people researched during the Unit of work. Inside the bauble, students write one sentence about the person on one side and draw a symbol on the other side.
- a statement to reflect the meaning of the concept of 'promise'
- identify at least one way/action to demonstrate preparation for the coming of Christ.

See Appendices 1, 2 and 3. (Appendix 3 shows an example of how the tree may look)

It is expected that students and teachers will co-construct an assessment rubric for this task. Teachers are encouraged to assess skills and knowledge from other learning areas that may be included in this task.

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity:

Read a picture story book about promises. Suggested titles are *The Book of Promises* or *The Promise*. Discuss the story. Conversation prompts may include: What is a promise? Have you ever made a promise? Did you keep it? Was it hard to keep? Has someone ever made a promise to you and broken it? How did you feel?

Write a class definition of the word promise.

- Brainstorm students' experience of Advent traditions in the Church (e.g. Advent wreath, Advent calendar, Liturgical colours). Share family traditions during Advent (e.g. Displaying the Christmas tree: When? Where? Who decorates? Significant and special decorations?)
- One of the Advent traditions is a Jesse Tree.

Jesse was the father of King David. The prophet Isaiah told the people that a king would come from the royal line of King David. The Jesse Tree has symbols that tell the story of some of the people who waited for the birth of this king who was the Saviour.

- The teacher sets up a large bare tree branch or something similar to create the base for the Jesse Tree. (N.B. A Christmas tree is not used for a Jesse Tree) **Appendix 4.**

Abraham	Genesis 17: 1-8
Jacob	Genesis 25:21-28
Joseph	Genesis 37:1-36
Moses	Exodus 34:1-11
Ruth	Ruth 2:12-13
David 1	Sam16: 1-13
Solomon	1 Kings 3:3-15
John Baptist	Matthew 3: 1-11
Joseph (Mary's husband)	Matthew 1:18-25
Mary	Luke 1: 26-36
Elizabeth and Zachariah	Luke 1: 5-24

N.B. These references are mainly for teacher background.

- In pairs or threes, students research the people listed above the Scripture references. Students write the story of their chosen person on a poster and display it behind the Jesse Tree. A symbol is created to represent the person and hung on the tree. Students present their learning to the class.
- Students in the same pairs or threes write a prayer for the symbol of their person. An example is *“Dear Lord, help us to be faithful like Ruth was and to be caring of others. Amen.”* These prayers may be placed around the Prayer Focus and prayed during Advent.

N.B. Students concurrently are also working on their own Jesse Tree symbols. For each person they need to create a bauble to place on their tree. To complete the bauble students are required to use the information they have heard about the Jesse Tree Character to draw an image they believe represents the person, decorate the front and write a sentence about who the person was. Throughout the learning experiences, students will add to their Jesse tree each time they hear about a new person.

Prayer Ritual

Gather students around the class Jesse Tree, share the prayers the class has written about the people whose stories were explored in the construction of the tree. Share the below statement

“Advent is the time when we prepare and wait for Jesus the promised Saviour.”

How do we wait and prepare for Jesus today? How can we help these around us feel the presence of God? Ask students to record how they are going to prepare for Christmas and place these statements around the tree also.

At the conclusion of the learning experiences students will take their Jesse Tree home and share the story of the people with their family.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Blank bauble

Appendix 2: Completed bauble examples

Appendix 3: Major assessment task example

Appendix 4: Classroom Jesse Tree example