



# Your (Unofficial) Guide to Advent

## Advent Ideas for Young Children

### Creating a Play and Pray Space

by Rev. Tori Mullin

If you are a faith community looking for ways to make your sanctuaries more child and family friendly consider adding a Play and Pray Space! These spaces can be as simple or elaborate as you have time and creativity for.

The basics are a place to sit, to do activities, and some storage. A children's table and chairs and some storage baskets on the floor will suffice, but depending on the amount of space you have you may want to include a play mat for infants, comfortable seating for parents who may be nursing or need to provide a cuddle, a book shelf, art supplies...and so on.

For communities of faith who don't have Sunday School during worship services this space can be used to provide activities that compliment that Sunday's theme. Sensory bins, colouring sheets, simple crafts, Bible story figures and felt boards are all excellent choices which can be enjoyed by a wide variety of ages. Visit the [Advent Unwrapped webpage](#) to find colouring pages and activity sheets that can be used to help families engage in the liturgical season.

### Nativity Set Challenge

Have fun with a nativity set challenge! Share pictures or reels on social media of your creative homemade nativity sets and you could win Advent Unwrapped bragging rights for a year! Make sure to tag #UCCAN and #AdventUnwrapped





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### Advent Sensory Bin

Ages: Preschool, 2–5 years

To create a sensory bin you need three things: a container, a base layer, and small items that represent the theme of your bin.

- A wide, flat container with a lid is ideal.
- For the base layer you can use sand, water, or something edible! Rice and cornmeal are great choices as smaller children may try to ingest it. For an Advent-theme sensory bin, fill your container with white rice to represent snow.
- The small items you add to your bin can match your theme, with different items for different liturgical seasons. For Advent, add painted rocks for each of the Advent candles in purple/blue and pink for the four candles of our Advent wreaths. You can write the words PEACE, HOPE, JOY and LOVE on rocks as well, or add wooden cut-outs from the craft store. I add purple and pink beads to my sensory bin, but you can also add pompoms, blocks, feathers, and even pieces of evergreen trees. Add anything that will be interesting to feel with little hands! Older children can also participate by decorating the rocks or other items you add to your bin. Small implements like tongs, scoops, and funnels can add another element of play to the bin.

Sensory bins can also be put together by families to enjoy at home.

### Spiritual Play in Advent

Sensory bins are a wonderful spiritual formation tool because they are tactile! Engaging children with sensory experiences will help to reinforce the stories they hear around Advent.

- Each week of Advent, add the candle and word associated with that week to your bin. Consider adding a white candle for Christmas Day with a peg-doll baby Jesus. If you have some non-breakable nativity figures at home you can add these to your bin too.
- Bury each object in the sensory bin, invite children to discover the objects and share what each one is as they find them.

