

REmail: November 29, 2006

Subject: Advent Materials for Quaker Families

Maggie Edmondson, Winthrop Center Friends Church, responded to the idea of Quaker Take-Out with a question about Advent Calendars. She was especially interested in calendars with Scripture verses or activity ideas behind the numbered doors. Advent is a great time for families to start incorporating some First Day School do-at-home activities. The excitement of opening a door a day naturally creates moments to reflect on Jesus' ministry, the Christmas story, and Quaker principles of peace, Light, and waiting.

Maggie had a couple of great ideas at the outset. Keep an Advent Jar on the table and add change at every meal until Christmas. Select a mission project as a family to receive the donation. Heifer Project is always a favorite and the Nativity Story gets us thinking about the importance of animals to an agricultural people. A second idea, her Meeting was going to participate in the town's Holiday Parade. They planned to dress up as Christmas Cards with simple sandwich boards and carry a message of Peace. They even invited other area churches to join them in an ecumenical Peace Witness.

It turns out, calendars with Scripture verses are fairly rare. Occasionally, the label would advertise verses and the calendar wouldn't have any. If you buy the calendar on-line, try to see an enlarged image. The pictures run the gamut from garish to tasteful. Children will probably love any calendar and even one with a blond Mary and a pale Jesus will help keep the Christmas Story at the center of the holiday. Beulah Enterprises, a Sunday School supply store (BeulahEnterprises.org or 203-772-3301), has Advent Calendars and several have Scripture verses. The staff is very accommodating and they have plenty in stock and can mail them out right away.

Helen Barron of Candle Press (candlepress.com or 303-337-6852) has a different style of Advent calendar with stickers. Here, the emphasis is even more on the story and less on the holiday. There is a verse for each day setting the Christmas Story in the broader context of the Bible. It begins with Creation, hopscoches through Exodus, and winds up in Luke and Matthew for the last nine days. Kids who have just learned how to look up passages would love this. The imagery is simple and less glittery than most Advent calendars.

Before and After Christmas: Activities and Ideas—Advent and Epiphany by Debbie Trafton O'Neal (ISBN: 0-8066-2534-1) is a joyful complement to an Advent Calendar. Each day from December 1-January 6 features a Bible verse, information about the Bible story or Christmas traditions around the world or across the centuries and craft ideas. I especially liked the "Add-a-Hand Wreath." Cut a hole out of a paper plate. Decorate the remaining white ring with hand tracings cut from green paper, adding one for each kind act someone in the family performs. By Christmas, a lovely full wreath is "a visual reminder of showing God's love with others...." At \$10.99, the book is well worth the price! Beulah Enterprises carries this as well.

Advent begins this Sunday, December 3rd. If you have treasured Christmas projects or resources for First Day School, send them my way.

In the Light,
Beth