

SHINE families celebrate

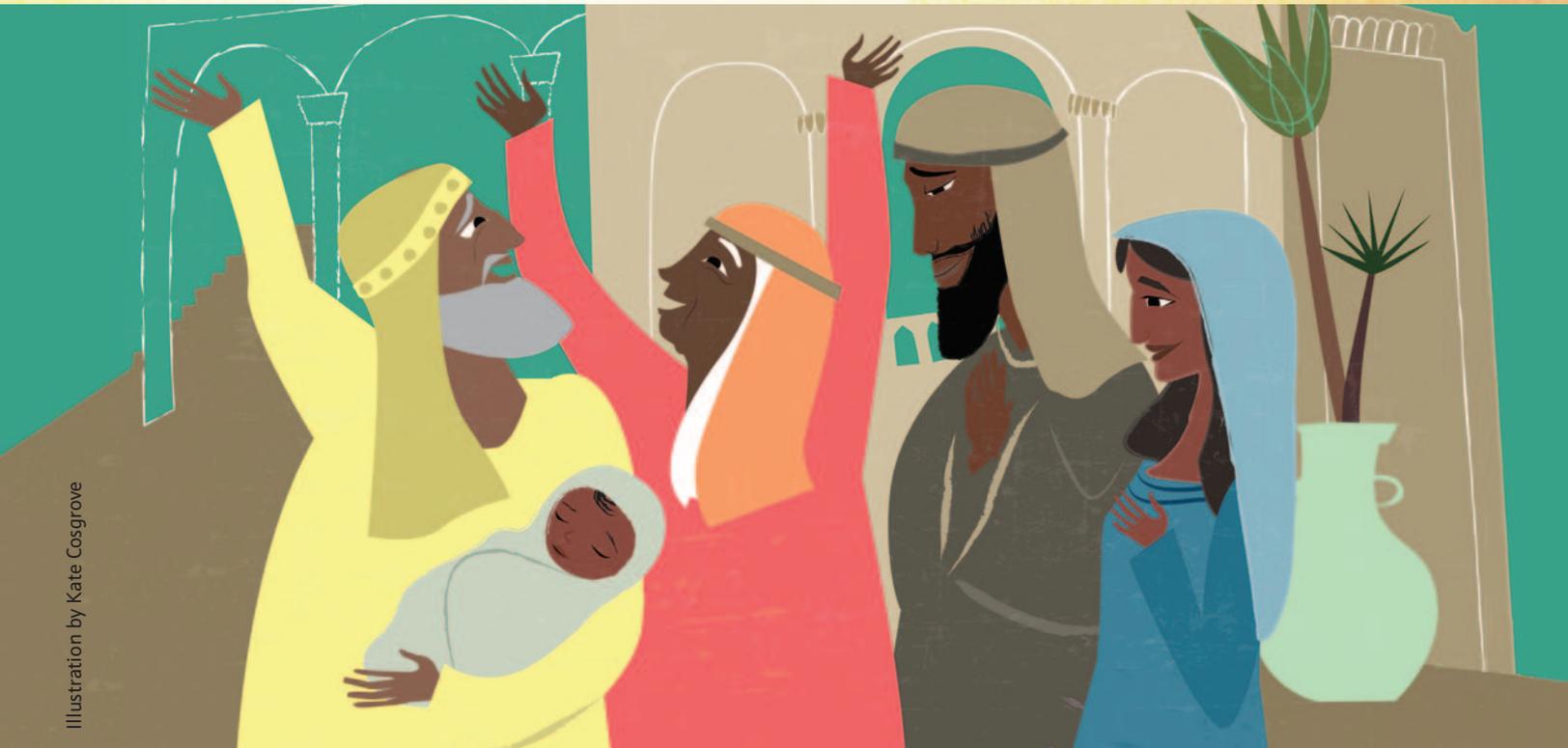


Illustration by Kate Cosgrove

A Long-Awaited Baby

Read the story of Jesus being first seen by Anna and Simeon from Luke 2:21–40 or from *The Peace Table*, pages 174–175. Talk together about these questions:

Have you ever waited a long time for something you were hoping for?
What do you think Simeon wondered as he waited to meet Jesus?

Simeon said a prayer of thanks when he held baby Jesus. Anna praised God and told her friends about Jesus' birth. Share about a time when you celebrated something special. What did you do?
What did you feel?

Simeon followed God with his whole heart. Anna prayed every day and night. They celebrated Jesus' birth with joy. We, too, can lift up our prayers and joys to God, who loves us.

SHINE
everywhere

Dear Families,

Our practice this month for growing faith at home is “Celebrate.” This practice covers a lot of things: holidays, traditions, moments, and rituals. Let’s see how each of these grows faith.

Holidays

Have you ever stopped to look at the word *holiday*? It is a contraction of “holy day”! Yes, the word comes from the practice of celebrating or observing the holy days. This month, we celebrate one of the most significant, the birth of Jesus, our Messiah and Savior. Celebrating holidays together at home is a fun and meaningful way to grow our faith. Read on for specific ways to celebrate “holi-days.”

Traditions

Traditions are the particular way a family celebrates special days like birthdays and holidays. We are followers of Jesus—how does that shape our family traditions? Advent and Christmas offer many opportunities to talk about your faith in Jesus. Some families have a tradition of putting out a Nativity set. When you put it out at the beginning of Advent, you might hide the baby Jesus until the 25th and place Mary and Joseph far from the Nativity set. As the days pass, move them closer to it little by little and have them arrive a few days before Christmas.



Illustration by Elisa Chavarri



Illustration by Laura Krushak-Tripp

Moments

We might equate this one with “practicing the presence of God” in everyday moments. It is being aware that something unusual or very good is happening. It may be when a child is absorbed in a new hobby, when siblings are playing together nicely, when a child delights you with his sense of humor or her wise insight. These are moments to savor with God and one another. “I love seeing you enjoying that.” “It’s great to seeing you having fun together!” “You are delightful!”

Rituals

Rituals make me think of routines and how routines lend stability and predictability to our lives. This is especially important for children, who appreciate rituals and routines. Have you ever done something two or three times, and when you fail to do it again, your child wails, “But we *always* do it this way!” If so, now you know how important rituals are! Shine Families offers you many practices that can become rituals; for example, the “Rose, Thorn, and Leaf” practice from the *Shine Families Talk* trifold and reading a storybook at bedtime.

Celebrations are fun and meaningful! Wishing you a fun and meaningful Advent and Christmas!

Shana Peachey Boshart
Shine Everywhere Project Facilitator



Jesus' Story, Our Stories

Christmas celebrates Jesus' birth. Anna's and Simeon's joy when they met Jesus is part of the story of Jesus coming to the world.

Take some time to recall your family's special stories. You could gather pictures or videos that remind you of important celebrations. For example, you might want to recall birth or adoption stories; baby dedications, christenings, or baptisms; graduations from programs or schools; or faith markers like completing a faith exploration class, memorizing scripture, or learning to read a story Bible.

See what details you can recall from these family stories. Who was there? What was said? Did you share in special meals or invite family and friends?

Pray together:

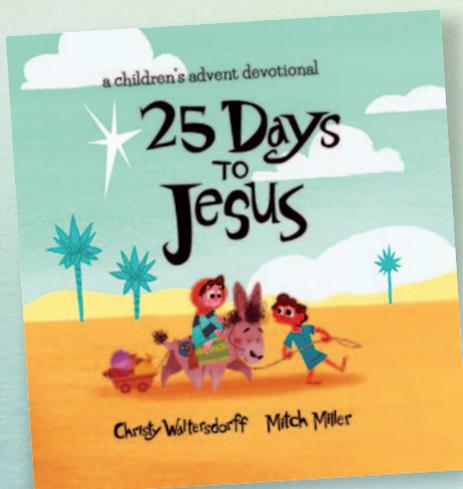
God, we give thanks for Jesus' coming to the world. We also remember these stories from our life together. Keep us connected to each other and to you. Let the memory of Jesus' birth help us to know that we are deeply loved. Amen.

Picture Book Corner

25 Days to Jesus, written by Christy Waltersdorff and illustrated by Mitch Miller, is a children's Advent devotional that highlights stories

connected to Jesus' birth. Each day offers one story, a scripture passage, and a prayer. Some stories reach all the way back to the prophet Isaiah and others tell of people who celebrated after Jesus was born, like Anna and Simeon, who are featured in this resource's scripture story.

Follow the QR code to find a link to this book.



Circles of Celebration



Cut out circles from paper that are 2–5 in / 5–13 cm in diameter. You could use colored paper or white paper that can be decorated with pencils, crayons, markers, or stickers.

Consider the previous months of this calendar year. On the circles, write down reasons that you have to celebrate. For example, you may want to highlight new skills learned, success in programs, friends made, gatherings enjoyed, new recipes discovered, or deepening faith practices.



Alternatively, you could put on the circles things for which you are hoping in the coming year.

Gather in a circle to share what you have created with one another.

Now display the completed circles. You could punch small holes in them, loop thread through the holes, and hang the celebration circles on a branch or even on your Christmas tree. You could also hang them from a ribbon that you display for the month.

Our 25 Days to Jesus

Cut out the following page so you can post it where people will see it each day. On this calendar, you will find a word and a scripture for each day. The word highlights some aspect of the Christmas story. The scripture verses are the same ones found in the featured picture book, *25 Days to Christmas*. If you are using the book, you can also read the short devotionals.

For each day, you can talk about how the featured word links to the story in the Bible about Jesus' birth. You can also talk about how that word relates to your own Advent and Christmas celebrations. If you like, place a sticker or stamp on each square to mark the days as Christmas draws closer.



Our Celebration Calendar

<p>1</p> <p>Promise (Isaiah 9:2-7)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Family (Matthew 1:1-17)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Sharing stories (Luke 1:1-4)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Waiting – Prayer (Luke 1:5-23)</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Blessing (Luke 1:24-25)</p>
<p>6</p> <p>Surprise (Luke 1:26-38)</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Friendship (Luke 1:39-45, 56)</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Singing (Luke 1:46-55)</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Trust (Luke 1:57-66)</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Praise (Luke 1:67-80)</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Looking for Jesus (Matthew 3:1-6)</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Kindness (Matthew 1:18-21)</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Journeying (Luke 2:1-3)</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Homecoming (Luke 2:4-5)</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Tender care (Luke 2:6-7)</p>
<p>16</p> <p>Good news (Luke 2:8-14)</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Excitement (Luke 2:15-20)</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Joy (Luke 2:22-35)</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Faithfulness (Luke 2:36-38)</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Challenges (Matthew 2:3-8)</p>
<p>21</p> <p>Hope (Matthew 2:1-2)</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Gifts (Matthew 2:9-11)</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Special moments (Luke 2:7)</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Preparations (Luke 2:6)</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Celebration (Luke 2:7)</p>



Something Good

This season involves waiting for the fun, culture-wide celebrations associated with Christmas and the coming new year. Yet every day contains its own small reasons to rejoice.

Set out a bowl or basket on your table or somewhere near where you gather as a family. Each day, share “something good” about the day. Each time a person shares, that person can place a small item—such as a wrapped candy or tiny ornament—in the bowl or basket as a visual reminder. Sometime around New Year’s Eve, take a few moments to get together and celebrate all the good you experienced over the month. You could go through the objects in the bowl then eat a festive meal together, play a game, or watch an uplifting movie.



With Our Whole Hearts

We can worship God with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. For each of the following sentence prayers, share with each other what actions or postures you would pair with them. Take turns trying out the suggestions as you repeat the sentences together.

- Like the angels, we **celebrate** Jesus’ birth!
- Like the shepherds, we are **amazed** by God’s love.
- Like Mary, we say yes to God’s good work and **treasure** it in our hearts.
- Like Joseph, we **listen** to God’s voice and obey.
- Like Simeon, we are **eager** to see what God is doing.
- Like Anna, we **rejoice** and share the good news.
- Like the magi, we seek **wisdom** to guide our paths.