



Fact: Every year \$20 billion is spent in North America on marketing to children. Even car manufacturers have marketing departments geared to kids.

Fact: In the United States children influence the spending of \$1 trillion annually, including what is spent on the family home.

Fact: 62% of children in the U.S. have a TV in their bedrooms, and a quarter of those children are under the age of two.

Fact: Your children have an average of 3,000 “ad encounters” a day. According to a recent study entitled “Media in the Home 2000,” Canadian children are spending up to six and a half hours per day connected in some way to various media. With television alone, this can result in up to 40,000 ads per year.

Fact: American children today spend five times more money (adjusted for inflation) than their parents did at their age. The fastest growing segment of those filing for bankruptcy in the U.S. are people under 25.

Fact: Our consumer culture teaches kids to start spending and never stop. Who is teaching our children about smart spending, regular saving, or generous sharing?

Fact: Big business is talking directly to your kids. Are parents or the church getting equal time?

Sources: Concerned Children's Advertisers www.cca-canada.com
Prodigal Sons and Material Girls by Nathan Dugan, pub. John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2003





Let's Celebrate Jesus' Birthday!

*Put all things to the test:
keep what is good and avoid every kind of evil.*
1 Thessalonians 5:21–22

This Advent season, will plastic cards outshine twinkling stars and mangers be nudged out by Christmas stockings? Only if we let them.

Will the season of giving, hope, and love become the season of getting, buying, charging, and worrying? Only if we let it.

We are becoming more and more aware of the monstrous materialism overtaking our society and of the mind manipulation that is turning our children into passionate consumers with no knowledge of saving or sharing.

This season is a good time to begin a new path. As individuals, parents, grandparents, and the church, we can seek ways to be good stewards. As we consider the true meaning of the season, we can celebrate in new ways, begin new patterns, and learn new lessons together.

The Advent calendar found on the reverse helps people of all ages, either individually or together, to celebrate the season of hope, peace, joy, and love. It may generate new ways to think about money as we enter 2006.



Advent Week One: Look Around

“What I say to you, then, I say to all: Watch!”

Mark 13:37

Buy, buy, buy! This is the message we receive up to 3,000 times a day. Often the ads suggest that our lives are not complete without a particular product. This week the scripture lesson tells us to watch for the coming of Christ. What are the other messages we receive in this time leading up to Jesus' birthday?

Prayer for the first Sunday of Advent:

Be with us, God, in this time of Christ's coming. We watch for signs of Jesus in our world and in our lives. Make our eyes, minds, and hearts watchful for opportunities to be signs of Jesus for others to see. Amen.

1. On Sunday plan your week of watchfulness. Read the tasks for Week One and decide how you will do them alone or in a group. How will you record what you see? You might create an Advent scrapbook or a daily log, draw pictures, or write stories.
2. On Monday be aware of ads on television or on the radio. How many times are the ads geared to children? What are the messages about spending?
3. On Tuesday make a note in your scrapbook or diary of other places where our society sends us messages. Where are the most unusual places that you see advertising? Try to count ads that you see.
4. On Wednesday look for symbols of the season. Which ones relate to Jesus' birthday? Which don't? Which images are most common?
5. On Thursday look for Advent sights that bring you joy.
6. On Friday ask what messages today encouraged you to give, not get.
7. On Saturday you might visit a mall or stores. Look at the shoppers around you. What are they doing? How do they look?



Advent Week Two: Wake Up

*“[God] promises peace to us, his own people,
if we do not go back to our foolish ways.”*

Psalm 85:8

In Week One you were watchful and observant. This week think about what your observations mean. Do you see any “foolish ways”?

Prayer for the second Sunday of Advent:

God of love and peace, we long for rest in the midst of busy lives. We yearn for calm in our troubled hearts. We suspect that your peace is as near as Christmas. Help us to wake up and see your way. Amen.

1. Our wake-up call this week is to see the danger of losing the meaning of Advent. We analyze Advent advertising and Christmas consumerism. On Sunday take time to reflect on the kind of Christmas you want. Discuss magical moments from Christmases past. Think about new traditions to start.
2. On Monday talk or think about advertising and how it works. What are the new “needs” that were created by the ads you noticed last week?
3. On Tuesday make a list of 10 items, with their costs, that you saw advertised last week. Talk about their importance in your life. Beside each write down something that you could buy with that money that would have more meaning.
4. On Wednesday make a list of the people and activities that are most important to you. How could these be part of your Advent plans?
5. On Thursday ask what you would do if you had \$200. How could you include saving or sharing in your plans?
6. On Friday talk or think about how “brands” may cost us more than necessary. How could we avoid this advertising trap?
7. On Saturday make a Christmas wish list of things money can’t buy. Share it with your family or friends.



Advent Week Three: Get Started

*“They will all do what is right, and God will be praised
for what [God] has done.”*

Isaiah 61:3

Prayer for the third Sunday of Advent:

Creator God, you set the planets in their courses, your oceans ebb and flow, your winds whisper or howl. You call us to action, too. You call us to love with energy, to serve with diligence, and to speak with authority. Help us to put our faith into action in the world. Amen.

1. On Sunday plan a limit for television viewing this week. Choose what shows you really “must” watch, then enjoy your freed-up time—walk, read books, light candles and listen to Christmas music, or have a conversation.
2. On Monday take three pieces of paper and write or draw something you might ask for as a Christmas gift. These are gift receipts. Find a box to collect them during the week.
3. On Tuesday surrender one gift receipt into the box. Instead of receiving that gift, make a small gift to give to someone else—a bookmark, a painting, a poem, or a piece of pottery.
4. On Wednesday surrender a gift receipt to the gift box. In exchange, decide on an activity to replace it—an evening walk to enjoy the Christmas lights, skating, or a favourite Christmas video.
5. On Thursday surrender the last gift receipt to the box. In exchange, write and deliver a secret Christmas note to someone you know, telling them why they are special. When all of the gift receipts are in the box, wrap it and place it under your tree. Open the box on Epiphany Sunday. Are the gifts still important?
6. On Friday think about the best gift you can remember. Why was it special? What happened to the gift? Who gave it to you?
7. On Saturday look at the list of Christmas traditions or memories from last week. Choose one and make it happen.



Advent Week Four: Joy of Giving

“Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you.”
Luke 1:28

In The United Church of Canada, we joyfully give to our work together through the **Mission and Service Fund**.

Prayer for the fourth Sunday of Advent:

Generous God, your many gifts show us how to love and give. Your gift of peace often eludes us. Help us to find peace and joy through giving, this week and in the year ahead. Amen.

1. This week give a gift and make a pledge (◆) each day. On Sunday give to WDR (World Development and Relief) to bring joy and peace to places where you cannot go.

◆ **This year I will learn about the work we do in the church through WDR and M&S at www.united-church.ca.**

2. On Monday make a family newsletter or Christmas Web page.

◆ **Next year I will spend more time with loved ones. I will _____**

3. On Tuesday purchase a gift of food and deliver it to a food bank.

◆ **Next year I will include the church in my actions. I will _____**

(join a committee, take a class, read the Bible)

4. On Wednesday make a home or church bird feeder or a suet ball.

◆ **Next year I will care for the earth. I will learn more about clean water for all at www.united-church.ca/ecology/water.**

5. On Thursday give toys or clothing to a local charity.

◆ **Next year I will help our church teach children to be stewards.**

6. On Friday create a gift card for Jesus. What gift will you give him?

◆ **In 2006 I will buy wisely and give joyfully.**

7. On Saturday bake cookies to share with others.

◆ **Next year I will try to give \$_____ to the M&S Fund.**

◆ Ideas for Using this Advent Calendar

- ◆ Make as many photocopies of this calendar as you need for your congregation. You can photocopy it on 11 x 17 paper or, if necessary, in two parts on 8 ½ x 11 paper.
- ◆ Introduce the calendar to your congregation before the first Sunday in Advent by using the “Facts” and the opening paragraphs. Suggest that they use it individually or as a family, and allow time in Sunday school or in worship to talk about what they experienced during each week.
- ◆ Consider using consumerism as the theme of an Advent study group. The websites listed below have interesting information about consumerism and children.
 - www.tvturnoff.org/facts.htm
 - www.cca-canada.com/
 - www.financial-education-icfe.org/children_and_money/index.asp
 - www.jumpstart.org/
 - www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/arts23.htm
 - www.christianitytoday.com/money/articles/excuse-youth.html
- ◆ Share pictures or notes from Week One on a bulletin board. They might make for interesting conversation during coffee time!
- ◆ Have the **M&S** envelope, the Christmas gift envelope, or the World Development and Relief envelope available so members can make a Christmas gift to **M&S**.



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MISSION AND
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