

Countdown to Christmas

Advent, which starts on December 1st, is a really exciting time because we know Christmas is coming soon!

Here's an activity for each day to help you follow the star to the heart of Christmas - you can do all of them or a few, at home or with friends. You can see one open each day on churchofengland.org/followthestar.


#FollowTheStar

<p>1 Star countdown: stick 24 stars on a chart dated from 1st December to 24th December. Take one down each day as a reminder to do something that day to bless a family member/friend.</p>   	<p>2 Star friends: write this simple prayer onto one or more stars "Loving God, bless my friend today". Give it to a friend who shines like a star for you.</p> 	<p>3 Star tree: find a special star for your Christmas tree. As you put it on the tree, gather everyone around and say this special prayer: "Star of wonder, star of light: may God's blessing be on our tree, on our home and in our hearts as we find the Christ child this Christmas."</p>	<p>4 Star cards: as you open your Christmas cards, say a short prayer for the people who sent it. Count how many star cards you receive, and think about displaying them together.</p> 
<p>5 Star blessings: stick up a large sheet of paper, and invite everyone to draw stars on it, of different sizes and shapes until every space is covered. Count how many stars are on the paper and then remember that God promises that he loves more people than the stars in the sky.</p>	<p>6 Star journey: if your church is involved in Posada, sign up to host Mary and Joseph on their journey or make your own Posada. See churchofengland.christenings.org/posada for more.</p> 	<p>7 Star sky: take a night walk on a clear night and look at stars together. Think of how wonderful and amazing the stars in the sky can be, and remember how stars lead people to think of the amazing wonder of God. See churchofengland.christenings.org/starry to see how a star lead some special visitors to Jesus.</p>	<p>8 Star above: make a family crib scene with all the traditional figures – Mary, Joseph, shepherds, sheep, donkey, wise men, angels – and maybe a few new ones too! Then make a large star to show the place where Jesus is found. (But keep the wise men separate, ready for a journey).</p>
<p>9 Star story: find a book of Christmas stories (look in charity shops, libraries or your own collection of books). Each evening, find a story which mentions the Star and read it together.</p> 	<p>10 Star name: find a map of stars and choose one star by name. Step outside each clear night that follows and try to spot that star. Remember those who followed the stars to find Jesus.</p>	<p>11 Star gift: make a small gift box and decorate it with stars. Place a simple gift inside or a promise of something such as tidying up or walking the dog, (you can even buy a gift of a star)!</p>	<p>12 Star light: as a family, light a candle in a darkened room. Look at the shape of the light from the flame. See how many star shapes you can see. Then invite each person to whisper their hopes for Christmas as a prayer.</p>

13 Star count: visit a local Christmas activity or the Christmas lights in a nearby town and count the number of stars that you see on display. Post pictures of all the stars you find.



14 Star string: cut out a star shape for each member of your family/friends. Write their name on one side and a one-word prayer on the other side, such as 'hope' or 'peace'. Tie the stars to a string or ribbon and hang them in your house as a decoration.

15 Star pole: make a large star and attach it to a long pole. Go carol singing to a special place, such as a residential home, following the star, and inviting people to join you. Sing 'Star of wonder, star of light' as you journey.



16 Star down: sing 'Away in a manger' together. When you get to the verse: 'the stars in the bright sky look down where he lay' invite everyone in the group to gently touch the child in the manger, (if you have a crib set at home), or simply make a cradle shape with your hands. Share a video of your family singing.

17 Star struck: place a small star on a table. Light a candle next to it. Remember that Jesus came as light to the world. Ask God to be light to everyone.

18 Star song: think of as many Christmas songs with the word 'star' in them as you can. Wonder together whether the star that is mentioned might be the one the Magi (wise men) followed.

19 Star tour: make a string of stars. Label each one with a different word: homeless, fighting, hungry, lonely, frightened, hurting, laughing, crying, hiding, running, working, singing, loving, searching. Choose one each day and pray that God's star light would be close to those in that situation.

20 Star shape: invite family and friends to create a giant star shape together, using their bodies. When everyone is in the shape, say a loud 'thank you' together for all the good things that happen around Christmas.



21 Star share: post pictures of the biggest star in your home, community, or at church on social media and join 'Night of the Stars' #followthestar

22 Star secret: at a family Christmas gathering, write each person's name on a star. Put them in a basket or a hat. Each person then draws out a name and during the day, they secretly find a way of being a star for the person whose name they chose. If you draw out your own name put it back!

23 Star dinner: make star tablemats for Christmas Dinner – or any other special family meal. Write a simple prayer on each one: 'Thank you God for the stars who bring us food, and the stars who prepared this meal. Thank you that stars lead us to the love of God and the light of Jesus. Amen.'

24 Star moment: find or make a star shape to hold in your hand, and say a big 'thank you' for the gift of Jesus as light for the world.



25

Star Christmas!!

Christmas begins, so open the presents, light up the tree, look up at the star – and remember to reflect God's starry love to each other in all you do and say today.