



FIRST ALLIANCE
CHURCH

The Christmas Tree

An Advent Guide



*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*

- Isaiah 11:1

Advent Daily Reading Plan

December 3	Luke 1:1-4
December 4	Genesis 49:8-12
December 5	Isaiah 9:6-7;11:1-5
December 6	Micah 5:2-4
December 7	Matthew 1:1-17
December 8	Matthew 1:18-25
December 9	Matthew 2:1-15
December 10	Matthew 2:16-23
December 11	Luke 1:5-25
December 12	Luke 1:26-38
December 13	Luke 1:39-45
December 14	Luke 1:46-56
December 15	Luke 1:57-65
December 16	Luke 1:67-80
December 17	Luke 2:1-7
December 18	Luke 2:8-21
December 19	Luke 2:22-40
December 20	John 1: 1-5, 18
December 21	John 1:6-8, 15
December 22	John 1:9-14
December 23	John 1:16-17
December 24	Isaiah 52:13-53:12
December 25	Revelation 21:1-8

*This guide was originally published in *The First Days of Jesus* by Andreas J. Kostenberger and Alexander Stewart.*



Introduction



Often when we read the Bible, we arrive at passages like Matthew 1 with the genealogies and are tempted to skip right over them. Lists of names upon names... it can seem uninteresting at best and unnecessary at worst. **But behind these lists of names are people like us who needed the rescue and redemption of the Savior.**

Welcome to *The Christmas Tree*, our theme for Advent 2023! We look forward to exploring the family tree of Jesus together in our corporate worship over the next four Sundays and in our individual lives all throughout the week.

This booklet has been designed to walk you through each week with:

- **A personal devotion** featuring a person in the genealogy of Jesus geared towards teens and adults with reflections and questions to ponder.
- **An FAC Kids Think & Do** for our younger FAC family!
- **An FAC Christmas family story** about God's faithfulness as we seek to be true to our commitment to love our neighbors, the nations, and next generation!
- **An activity and OUT focus** to bring some Christmas cheer to you and others!

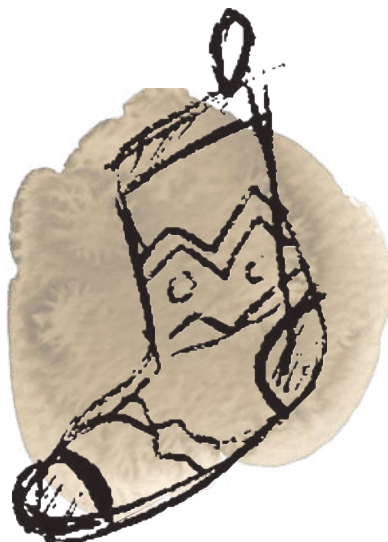
Throughout the Advent season, we will also light candles on Sunday mornings as we **celebrate themes of Preparation, Promise, and Peace**. Our Advent celebration will culminate on Christmas Eve as we light the final candle—the Christ Candle—and celebrate the birth of our Savior. He comes through a family lineage of imperfect people like us who needed rescue and redemption they could not achieve for themselves.

May we prepare our hearts, believe the promise, receive the peace, and give away our Jesus to others this Advent season. **Let's contemplate *The Christmas Tree*.**

The First Alliance Staff

Read...

- Dec. 3-Dec. 9
Promise Page 4
- Dec. 10-Dec. 16
Preparation Page 9
- Dec. 17-Dec. 23
Peace Page 13



Listen...



For our full Christmas playlist scan here.

Week 1 Promise

Devotional

By Dr. Marilyn Sails

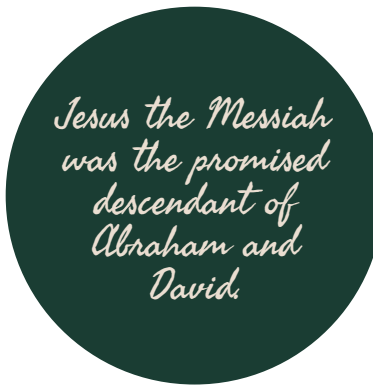
All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").
- Matthew 1:22-23

Hallelujah! There is so much "good news" in the gospel of Matthew because The Creator came so that He could dwell with His creation! We are His creations. Let's take that in for a moment. The God of ALL creation! The Word who spoke a "word" and created Heaven and Earth into existence! The all-powerful God, the ever-present God, the Balm of Gilead, the God who sent his one and ONLY son Jesus to free us from the bondage of sin came to dwell with us! Wow!

If you ever wanted your life story written, who best knows you to be able to share your story? In the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew was chosen by Jesus to follow him and later wrote the book of Jesus' life story as a first-hand witness under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel of Matthew provides an extensive genealogy of Jesus' relatives. For some, it may seem a little bit boring, but when you think about the roots of Jesus' earthly lineage and how all these relationships intertwine and provide a historical account of prophecy, then you appreciate the unfailing love that He has for us.

Jesus the Messiah was the promised descendant of Abraham and David. God promised Abraham that through his descendants "all the nations of the earth would be blessed" (Genesis 22:17-18). God promised David that one of his descendants would have a kingdom that never ends (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Therefore, Jesus'



family tree in Matthew starts with Abraham, adventures through David, explores the years of captivity, and then introduces us to Jesus' earthly adoptive father, Joseph.

Traditional Christmas stories often focus on Mary, Jesus' mother. While her story is beautiful and worth pondering, the remarkable humanity of Joseph marrying Mary to fulfill prophecy is sometimes lost.

Joseph, being a good and kind

man who is engaged to Mary, learns of her pregnancy and still marries her even knowing that he was not the father. He didn't want to disgrace her by breaking the engagement and he planned to quietly divorce her. We know the story in hindsight. But imagine it in real time, with real emotion. What was Joseph going to do? I am sure he thought about the what ifs, what people would think if they found out that he was not the father, the ridicule and shame of it all.

I have often heard that instant obedience is a heart that God loves.

Scripture states that Joseph was worried and would lay awake pondering what he should do. It was not until he fell asleep and saw an angel standing before him who revealed five things that would change the course of history:

- Joseph, do not be afraid and marry Mary;
- the baby that Mary carries is from the Holy Spirit;
- Mary will give birth to a son;
- you are to give him the name Jesus;
- He will save His people from their sins.

Simple, right? Maybe not. Would Joseph display his love for God by marrying a woman who he knew was carrying a child that was not his? Would he believe the angel? Would he put off fear?

Joseph could have dismissed this encounter as just another dream, but he did not. Joseph awoke from that dream and was obedient. He did what was commanded by the Angel of the Lord.

Joseph was a man of faith, mercy, and obedience. Like his chosen wife Mary, he too was chosen to become a part of the lineage of Immanuel, "God with Us".



Marilyn is a wife, mom, clinical social worker, college instructor, and nonprofit founder of a homeless outreach organization, but most of all, she's just a "Jesus Girl" who loves to worship and shout "Hallelujah" as a way of saying "Thank you Lord for your grace and mercy over my life". Traditionally, each Thanksgiving evening after the big dinner she and her family decorate for Christmas both inside and outside.

Reflection Questions

1. How can the opening chapter Gospel of Matthew help you know Jesus better? How can you lean into it this Advent season?
2. Who would you want to write your life story? Where has God spoken to you in the past?
3. Will you do what God wants? Would you do it even at the risk of being ridiculed by people?

Family Recipe

Peppermint Cookies

By Betty Sufana



"This is my mom's recipe that she made every Christmas."

½ c butter
½ c shortening
1 c confectioner's sugar
1 egg
1½ tsp almond extract
1 tsp vanilla

2½ c all purpose (or gluten free) flour
1 tsp salt
½ tsp red food color
½ c crushed peppermint candy
½ c granulated sugar

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Mix thoroughly butter, shortening, confectioner's sugar, egg, and flavorings. Blend in flour and salt. Divide dough in half; blend food color into one half. Mix candy and granulated sugar. Shape 1 tsp dough from each half into 4 inch rope; roll each rope back and forth on lightly floured board. Place ropes side by side; press together lightly and twist. Place on ungreased baking sheet. Curve top down to form handle of cane. Bake about 9 min. or until set and very light brown. Immediately sprinkle cookies with candy mixture; remove from baking sheet. Makes about 4 dozen.



I grew up in Northwest Indiana about 40 miles from Chicago. I moved here in 1977 to work for IBM as a programmer. I first started attending FAC in 1978 when it was in Cardinal Valley, returning again in 2022. I retired in 2009 then started working part time at Wild Birds Unlimited in 2011. My favorite Christmas tradition is decorating the tree and the house.





Christmas Family Tree Story

From Tents to Greenhouses

Thank you to G. Edward Mangham for the many family and denominational details needed for this story.

As a successful young businessman sat with his wife, listening to a passionate missionary's appeal for someone to take the Gospel to the unreached and resistant people of Arabia, George sensed that God was saying to him, "You're that man!" So when the invitation was extended, he stood and announced, "We will go!" Later, while on their way home, when George apologetically asked his wife Lola May her thoughts about what he had done, she replied, "If you hadn't stood, I would have done so!" Thus began an amazing journey of profound self-sacrifice, extraordinary adventure, and historic Kingdom advance, not only throughout the Middle-East, but wherever George and Lola May's missionary service took them.

Even during home assignment furloughs back in the states, they aggressively sought to expand God's Kingdom and to strengthen the Christian & Missionary Alliance denomination's reach. **So it was that in 1949, on one of his study furloughs at Asbury Seminary, George W. Breaden**

held evangelistic tent meetings which led to the launch of what is now our own First Alliance Church in Lexington. These first tent meetings were on the corner of High Street and Ransom Avenue downtown, strategically placed near City Hall, University of Kentucky, Transylvania University, and the center of commerce. These humble beginnings have now touched five generations of Lexingtonians... and five generations within their very own family.

While God's power was mightily displayed through George and Lola May's faithful servant-leadership in Lexington and across Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Arabia, their own five children have served as C&MA Missionaries in Cambodia, Lebanon, India, Vietnam and stateside in the C&MA National Office, World Relief, universities, and numerous local churches. Their children's children, including Ed and Sharon Mangham who serve on our FAC prayer team, have served the Lord in Cambodia, Japan, Malaysia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Philippine

Islands, Thailand, Hong Kong and New York City, and also at the National Office and in local churches.

Now the fourth generation is carrying forward the work of God's Kingdom advance both at home in Lexington and abroad. Ed (George and Lola May's great, great grandson) and Julie Mangham are deployed overseas out of First Alliance through the C&MA as regional field directors. And to make it even better, George and Lola May's great, great, great grandson Laytham Mangham is one of our current FAC Greenhouse Residents, being raised up to serve the Lord in whatever capacity He desires.

It is doubtful that George and Lola May ever thought that their very own third, fourth, and fifth generations would be a part of First Alliance when they ministered out of that tent downtown. And yet their commitment to the mission of God and to reaching the lost wherever they lived has impacted numerous families and individuals, including their very own.



George W. Breaden



G. Edward & Sharon Mangham



Ed & Julie Mangham



Laytham Mangham

FAC Kid's Devotional

Read:

2 Kings 23:2-3, Matthew 1:1-17

Think:

- This Advent season, we are focusing on the people who make up Jesus' family tree. In the Gospel of Matthew, we can read a genealogy (that's a fancy word for family tree) of some of the people who made up Jesus' family - 42 generations worth! There's A LOT of people listed there that we could learn about and learn from! But for this week, let's focus on one guy in that list named Josiah.
- Josiah became the king of Judah (the southern half of the divided nation of Israel) when he was only 8 years old. Some of you are 8 years old. Can you imagine being in charge of a whole country right now?! When King Josiah was 26 years old, somebody working in the temple found the Book of the Law. Today, it wouldn't be strange for us to find a Bible at our church building, but back in Josiah's time, nobody had even seen or talked about God's Word for around 70 years! At that time, the only part of God's Word that people had was the Book of the Law, which makes up the first five books of our Bibles today.
- Well, let's get to the "promise" part of this slice of Jesus' family tree. When someone read the rediscovered Book of the Law to Josiah, he realized how awful it was that they had been without it and that they had not been living as it told them to for SO long! He got all the people together, and they made a HUGE promise to God (called a covenant) that they would follow His Word.
- Josiah loved God, loved the people whom God had put in his care, and he committed his life as a king to bring the people back into a right relationship with God. Josiah and his people made a promise to God to keep His commandments and to follow God with all their soul and heart.

Do:

- Talk as a family about the promise (or covenant) Josiah and his people made with God! What does it look like for your family to make the same kind of promise to God, to keep His commandments and to follow God together? What are some practical ways you can do that this week?
- We obviously can't know the stories about everyone in Jesus' family tree, but we can read some of them scattered throughout scripture. Here's a challenge for your family: after dinner each night this week, choose a person from Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1, search for their story in the Bible, and see if they had something to do with a promise with God!



All FAC Kids Devotionals were written by our Children's Pastor, Tim Davis and our Nursery & Preschool Coordinator, Hannah Meredith.

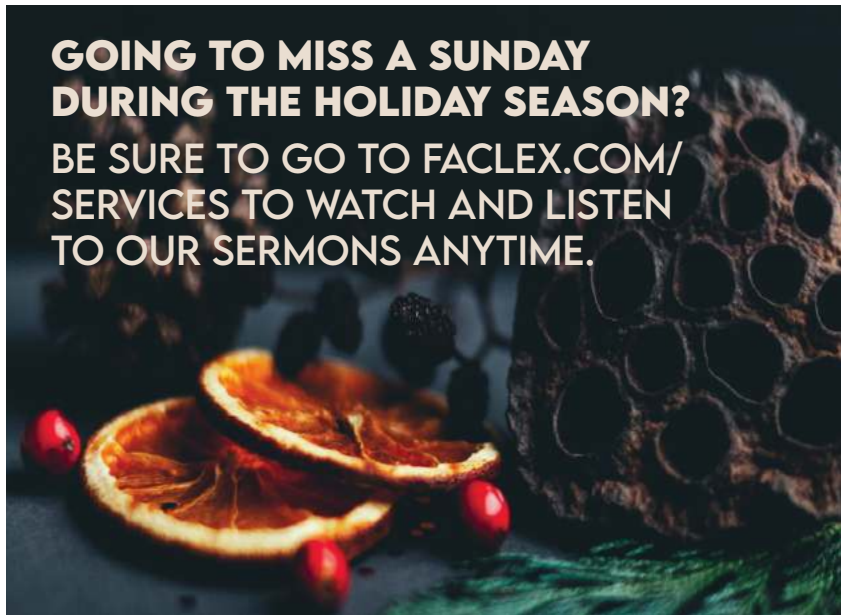
Serve With Care

Sign up to serve our partners through one of our Christmas service opportunities:

- **Provide a meal for a family.** We are partnering with Booker T Washington Elementary, Wellington Elementary, and Russell Cave Church of Christ to provide meals this Christmas. Cost is approximately \$60. Sign up at faclex.com/events.
- **Give a gift to Natalie's Sisters.** Our goal is to provide 30 Christmas gifts at \$15 each. Sign up at faclex.com/events.
- **Give an Angel Tree gift.** We are partnering with Wellington Elementary to provide Angel Tree gifts. Sign up at faclex.com/events.
- **Make a card** and deliver it to someone who is homebound or at a nursing home or provide a gift to a busy cashier or server.



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Week 2 Preparation

Devotional

I spent two years in the Cub Scouts when I was younger. My experience was not necessarily life-changing, but there are memories that have shaped me from that time. One moment, though, stands out from the rest. One of the staples of Cub Scouts is a competition called the Pinewood Derby. Each scout is required to make a car out of a block of wood, axles, and wheels. My father decided to use this opportunity to teach me to be more self-sufficient. He helped put it together, but he left it to me to decorate.

When I showed up for the event, I was devastated to find out that my car was shaped like an old Studebaker compared to the other cars. All my friends started laughing when they got a glimpse of the poorly painted blue car with disproportioned lightning bolts on the side. Based on appearance, I was not the favorite to win. Beating all odds, my car won the first heat, then the next, then the next. In the finals, it was the crude blue Studebaker that won the event by more than a car length, to the dismay of all those who doubted.

A part of Jesus's story is a family history that no one would want to uncover on Ancestry.com. There is one name that Matthew leaves out in his list of those who came before Jesus: King Joash. Joash was born into an ugly situation that had little promise.

His father, Ahaziah, was a king who did evil before the Lord. At his father's death, his grandmother Athaliah set out to kill all her grandchildren. His story doesn't seem to fit in the lineage of the Messiah. But when we look deeper, we see a typical pattern of how God revealed His plan of salvation.



As Athaliah is doing the unthinkable in taking the lives of her grandchildren, there is an aunt who courageously rescues Joash. That child is guarded by men, mostly Levites, who sought to be obedient regardless of the cost. With death all around, the promise of a king in the line of David was sustained by a child unaware of his importance. God used those who probably didn't look the part of a warrior to ensure the safety of this weak and vulnerable king. Odds-makers would probably put money on Athaliah winning the day by eliminating Joash.

When I think of Joash, I reflect on how God was true to His

By Brian Scott

promise of redemption through the most unlikely of people and circumstances. This redemption narrative continues to be carried by weak and broken vessels. But this only emphasizes the all-surpassing power and intention of God to complete what He started. Athaliah couldn't stop it. Herod couldn't stop it. No matter what it looks like based on what is happening in your world, nothing or no one, including the Enemy, can stop God's plan to continually rescue and redeem you.

Reflection Questions

1. What are possible lies you are believing about yourself based on the outward appearance of your circumstances? Have you asked God His thoughts on what you are going through?
2. Can you trace your own redemption story, recognizing the times when God brought victory out of certain defeat?
3. How can you use your story to encourage others and point them to a loving Father who will never disappoint or fail to bring redemption?



Brian Scott and his wife, Susan, came to FAC by way of the Ohio Valley District office of the C&MA where Brian has served while also being part of the FAC family for seven years. They have three adult children, Payton, Jordan, and Bryson, who now all currently live outside of Kentucky. Favorite Christmas traditions include traveling home to Ohio in order to spend time with extended family, as well as, eating some amazing smoked meats and baked goods.

Family Recipe

Kolač (Poppyseed Roll)

By Sarah Moore

"My mom makes this Czechoslovakian dessert every Christmas Eve to have on Christmas morning. She got the recipe from her mom, who got the recipe from her mom, who got the recipe from her mom!"

For Dough:

- 1 pkg active dry yeast
- ¼ cup milk
- 1 ½ Tbsp sugar, divided
- 3 cups flour
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 stick of butter, softened
- 2 small eggs, room temp, beaten
- ½ cup sour cream, room temp

For Filling:

- 2 cans of poppy seed filling (Solo brand can be found on Amazon and in some stores in December)
- 2 tsp milk, divided

For Egg Wash:

- 1 egg white
- Splash of water

Instructions:

1. Warm up the milk in the microwave or on the stove until it is hot, but not too hot to put your finger in it. (About 100 - 110 degrees.) Dissolve the yeast in the milk and stir in 1/2 Tbsp of the sugar. Leave the yeast mixture to sit for 15 minutes.
2. While the yeast mixture sits, combine the flour, salt, butter, eggs, sour cream, and 1 Tbsp of sugar in a mixer until it just comes together.
3. Add the yeast mixture to the dough and let it knead on a dough hook for 10 minutes on the lowest setting. The dough should become slightly sticky feeling, but not stick to your fingers.
4. In a bowl, mix 1 can of poppy seed filling with 1 tsp of milk.
5. Roll half of the dough out on a floured surface until it is approximately a 10 x 13 inch rectangle, with the longest side facing you. Spread the filling mixture over the whole rectangle, leaving some space toward the edges.
6. Carefully roll up the rectangle, starting from the long side, until it is a 13 inch tube. Pinch the seam of the dough closed along the side and on the ends to prevent the filling from coming out. Transfer the log to a parchment-lined baking sheet, then tuck the two ends of the log under. Repeat steps 4-6 with the other can of filling and other half of the dough.
7. Once the second log is on the baking sheet, cover both with a towel and let rise in a warm place about an hour. Logs should double in size and flatten a bit.
8. Brush with an egg white/water mixture. Bake for 35-40 minutes at 350 degrees until

golden and hollow sounding when tapped. Don't worry if the roll splits and filling leaks out. You will be in good, befuddled company this holiday season!

9. To serve, wait until cool then slice and dust with powdered sugar.



Though poppy seed filling has a unique taste and texture, it is sweet and if you're not careful you may end up eating it by the spoonful straight from the can! My mom always had a lot of cooking to do on Christmas Eve, so as my sister and I got older we started helping out with some of the easier dishes, like the Kolač, with her loving guidance. She was so proud to pass this family recipe on to her daughters and I can't wait to do the same for my little girl. I grew up just outside of Louisville, met my husband at Asbury and we've been married for five years and have two kids.





Christmas Family Tree Story

A Picture of Grace

Amy Long

The Bible defines grace as unmerited favor, a gift not earned but free. When I think about grace in my own life one of the things that comes to mind is heritage. Our family's Christian heritage is by God's grace and His design. I didn't earn it. It's free yet so valuable.

This four-generation story begins in Joplin, Missouri, where Bill Long became a follower of Jesus at an Alliance church in 1960.



Ethan, Liz (holding Rosalee), and Linden Long

In 1969, Bill and his wife Liz moved to Lexington where they quickly made Cardinal Valley Alliance Church (the former name of FAC) home. Their son Linden grew up in this faith-filled community of believers. It shaped him and grounded him.

All the while, raising their young family in Louisville, Sam and Doris Strader had a growing faith. They sought out a Bible-teaching church and landed at First Alliance, Louisville. Then, in 1980 they moved to Lexington where they found their church home at FAC.

That is how Linden and I met and then married! We raised our three kids here at FAC.

Now, 29 years later, our son Ethan, who serves on the worship team, and his wife Amelia have started their own family and sweet baby Rosalee is the fourth generation for the Longs and Straders at First Alliance. On

Sundays now, all four generations are here for worship!

We are imperfect people grafted into God's family being used to accomplish God's perfect plan by His grace. The richness of the FAC community of like-minded adults walking alongside us as we raised our family has been invaluable. We are thankful for the work God has done in our lives through His Church and, most importantly, Himself.



Doris Strader, Amy Long, Ethan Long (holding Rosalee), and Sam Strader

Serve A Neighbor

Make your favorite holiday treat or the recipe from this booklet and give to a neighbor, co-worker, or friend!



FAC Kids Devotional

Read:

Luke 2:1-7

Think:

- What kinds of things does your family prepare for? A big trip? A party you're hosting at your house? Friends or family coming to stay for a few days? Some of us even prepare, or get ready for, the Christmas season to come! We decorate our house, sing carols, bake cookies - we have all sorts of ways to prepare for the coming of Christmas. Did you know that the Bible also talks about people preparing for the very first Christmas?
- Think of Joseph and Mary, two very important people on Jesus' family tree! They had to travel 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem - that's like walking from Lexington to Louisville! It probably took them about four days. What kind of preparations would they have to make for their journey?
- Then, soon after they arrived in Bethlehem, Mary had her baby, Jesus! If you thought it took a lot of time and effort for Mary and Joseph to prepare for their long trip, the preparation they had to do every single day to be ready to be the dad and mom on earth to Jesus, God's Son, was so much MORE! But - we know that God picked Joseph and Mary for this important job, and He was going to help and prepare them all along the way!
- The same is true for us! At Christmas time we talk a lot about making room for Jesus in our hearts and our lives and, even though it's great to focus on those things now, it's really something we should be doing every day, all year! We can always thank God for each new day and remember that He'll be with us every minute of our day. He will help and prepare us to see Jesus at work in our lives and around us!

Do:

- Spend a few minutes each morning together as a family to prepare for the day, asking God to help you look for Him and listen for Him. Then, spend a few minutes during dinner or at bedtime sharing what happened!
- If your whole family can, everyone pack a backpack with some clothes or shoes, then walk around the block carrying them. Think about the hard trip Joseph and Mary had to make as they got ready for Jesus to come.



Week 3 Peace

Devotional

What do we mean when we say Jesus can relate to us in every aspect of our lives? He was in all ways tempted as we are yet without sin. How can He relate to me? Does He have any idea who my family is and where I come from? Of all families on earth, He could never relate to mine! We have divorce, adultery, mental illness, abandonment issues, even incest and rape. No way, no how, not now and not ever!

When we look at the lineage of Jesus in Matthew 1, to know the story behind each person mentioned is to begin to understand that He truly can understand us. He gets us! There are lots of men listed before we get to David, midway through, but there are also some women.

Tamar posed as a prostitute and was propositioned by her father-in-law who got her pregnant. Jesus' lineage.

Rahab was a prostitute in the city of Jericho. Jesus' lineage.

David committed adultery and then plotted the murder of his lover Bathsheba's husband. Jesus' lineage.

David, a man after God's own heart. David, who fine tuned his trade as a shepherd boy by killing bears and lions, well prepared then to use those skills to kill the giant Goliath. David, who wrote most of our beloved Psalms, ones for the good, the bad, and the ugly occasions in our lives.

David experienced most every challenge common to you and me: emotional roller coasters, temptations of lust, sibling rivalry, being overlooked and underappreciated, and more.

Each of these gave him a theme for the next Psalm.

David, who Saul pursued and tried to kill, who still loved and honored Saul. David, who was looked over by men but was actually God's special choice as the youngest son, prepared to be king and the ancestor of the King of Kings. David who ruled his kingdom with love, tenderness, forgiveness, and godly authority, yet was betrayed by King Saul and Absalom, his own son.

David wrote these powerful Psalms under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, such as the Psalm 23, because he knew he could trust the Good Shepherd. After committing adultery and plotting murder, he gave us Psalm 51 to model what true repentance, humility, and brokenness looks like.

David was an Old Testament glimpse of what his divine relative, Jesus of Nazareth, would go through to then better understand us. While Jesus himself was sinless, he was tempted as we are. Further, as our second Adam he comes from a line of people who did not have tidy perfect lives.

So when you wonder if Jesus understands, if He feels, if He even knows what you're going through, you can know without a shadow of doubt, He gets you! His family and lineage was broken, dysfunctional, unstable, and sinful to the core. He gets you! His majestic entrance into this fallen world was in a humble stable, witnessed by farm animals and heralded to the world by smelly, humble shepherds. He gets you!

By Ron Brown

Reflection Questions

1. Is there any reason you can think of why Jesus would not be able to relate or understand you, your life, or family situation?
2. Is your family broken? Jesus' family was also very broken. What can you pray for in your family that needs healing? Where can you invite Jesus to enter the messiness of your family tree? Where can you prepare your own heart for more of His presence?
3. How can you relate to 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 and be part of comforting others just as you have been comforted? How can you show others that Jesus knows, cares, and understands what they are going through?



I have been involved in mission's ministry the past 48 years including with Native Americans in the southwest part of the US, Spain, and leading medical/dental/surgical teams to some 25 countries for the past 23 years. We are blessed with four married children and eight grandchildren. Our youngest son, Stevie, served as youth pastor here for six years before serving in N Africa and our eldest son, Nathan, also attends here with his family. We have been here at FAC two years, since moving back to KY. Since our family is scattered, as was mine growing up on the mission field, I love it when all of our family is together to celebrate.

Family Recipe

Pumpkin Bread

Doris Strader

*"This recipe was my mom's grandmother's."
- Amy Long*



- 1 cup oil
- 3 cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 can pumpkin
- 3 cups flour
- ½ t salt
- ½ t baking powder
- 1 t baking soda
- 1 t nutmeg
- 1 t cinnamon
- 1 t cloves

Preheat oven to 350 degrees
Grease 2 large or 6 small loaf
pans.

Mix sugar and oil well. Beat in eggs. Add pumpkin. Combine all dry ingredients. Add dry ingredients to mixing bowl and mix until well blended. Fill loaf pans equally. Bake large loaf pans for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until the toothpick comes out clean. For small loaf pans 45 minutes to an hour depending on size. Cool in pans. Scrape around edges and dump onto a cooling rack. Wrap loaves in foil when completely cool. Freezes well.

Serve By Invitation

Invite someone to church on Sunday or to our Christmas Eve services. Use the QR code for the digital invitation!





Christmas Family Tree Story

Friends That Become Family

Alex and Claudine's story includes many examples of God opening doors, answering prayers, and providing blessings they couldn't explain. God's hand is on their lives! For background, Alex's entire family was killed in the war in Congo while he was in high school. He went to a Ugandan refugee camp when he was 26 years old.

Claudine also fled Congo because of war, spending time in refugee camps in Rwanda and Uganda. It was in the Ugandan refugee camp that Alex and Claudine met in 2012. They were married there in 2013. They had their first two children, Sabana and Joy while in the camp.

They prayed fervently for direction for where to go and what to do. They asked God to show them about leaving Africa and to make his will clear. In their words, after 14 years of prayer collectively, "Put God first, tell him what you want, and He works."

In 2019 they finished all paperwork needed and the US government along with two agencies worked to get them here, loaning them the money for their airline tickets (which they have since paid back).

When arriving at Blue Grass Airport, Alex and Claudine were amazed at the welcome by members of First Alliance Church. They were (and felt) loved from the start! Different members of the church greeted them and helped furnish an apartment for them to live in. Within a few weeks, they recognized "No church will be better than this

one. This is our church," said Alex.

"Since that day we felt we have family now," Claudine stated. One of the families that has been a big part of the Alex family building a life in Lexington have been FAC members Mark and Carol Fisher. When the opportunity was announced at FAC in 2019 to help with a new refugee family, they were excited to get involved. And while they were not able to be at the airport the night they first



arrived, they met them the following Sunday at church. They have journeyed together ever since.

"Prior to their arrival, I had been praying that God would lead me to someone or give me a new focus during my retirement. Amazingly, it feels like the Lord brought Alex into my life to fill the void left by our estranged son," stated Mark.

And the feeling is reciprocal. Not only do Alex and Claudine feel that connection with Mark and Carol, but "our children feel the love of everyone at FAC and call Mark and Carol Grandpa and Grandma!", says Claudine.

As an added bonus, today in Congo, Claudine's mother has stepped in to help her neighbor with childcare because of how Claudine's children have been cared for by Mark and Carol, the Feller family, and others at FAC.

It isn't just DNA that makes a family a family. God can knit hearts together, and do it across nations, languages, and generations. And we are all the better for it!



Alex and Claudine with their three children, Sabana, Bethany, and Joy. Mark and Carol Fischer are in the center.

FAC Kids Devotional

Read:

Isaiah 9:6-7 and 53:5, Luke 2:10-14, Romans 5:1

Think:

- Before we start thinking about another person on Jesus' family tree, take a few minutes to talk together about peace! Where does it come from? What makes things peaceful? Make a quick list of some things that bring you peace.
- Now that your brain is warmed up, let's dive into our last (and the most important!) person on Jesus' family tree... Jesus himself! The Bible is full of places that associate Jesus with peace. In John 14, Jesus tells His disciples that He gives us peace; in Luke 2, the shepherds get to hear the angels sing "peace on earth;" in Isaiah 9, we are told that He will be called the "prince of peace;" and then in Isaiah 53, we read that "the punishment that brought us peace was on Him."
- Wait, that doesn't sound quite right! His punishment brought us peace? What do punishment and peace have to do with each other? As it turns out, kind of a lot! Since all the way back in the beginning, when Adam and Eve committed the first sin, our relationship with God has been broken, not at peace. There was nothing we could do on our own to fix our broken, sinful, peaceless relationship with God... which is where Jesus comes in! He came, lived a perfect, sinless life, and died on the cross, taking the punishment we deserved for breaking our relationship with God. Jesus went through our punishment, so that we could be at peace with God (Luke 2, Rom 5).
- It's important for us to remember that this kind of peace we're talking about is not us feeling a certain way. Instead, this is the kind of peace that comes from God. Because of Jesus' work here on earth, God now looks at us as His beloved children, who, by His grace, are being made righteous!

Do:

- It's Christmas time, which means you've probably been doing a lot of thinking about the Christmas story, the story of Jesus' birth. But for this week all about peace, take a look together at the end of the story, the part leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection in one of the Gospels (Matt 26-28, Mark 15:12-16, Luke 22-24, John 13-21). Talk about what it means for Jesus to have taken our punishment so that we can be at peace with God.
- Here's a Christmas challenge for your family! Memorize Isaiah 9:6 together and, once you've got it down, come tell it to Tim or Hannah as a family to get a special Christmasy treat!



Christmas Light Scavenger Hunt

After you finish your family devotional, load up in your car and go look at Christmas lights together. One of the most fun things to do while looking at lights together is a scavenger hunt. See if you can find everything on the list in Christmas light decorations!



Manger Scene

Candy Cane

Wreath on a Door

North Pole Sign

Snowman

Carolers

Elf

Giant Present

Angel

Santa

Rudolph

Spiral Tree

Giant Ornaments

Joy Sign

Christmas Train

Polar Bear

Stocking

Teddy Bear

Toy Soldier

Snowflake

Reindeer on Rooftop

Poinsettia

Tree in Window

Gingerbread Man

Dancing Lights

Snow globe

Grinch

House with Red Lights

House with Blue Lights

House with White Lights

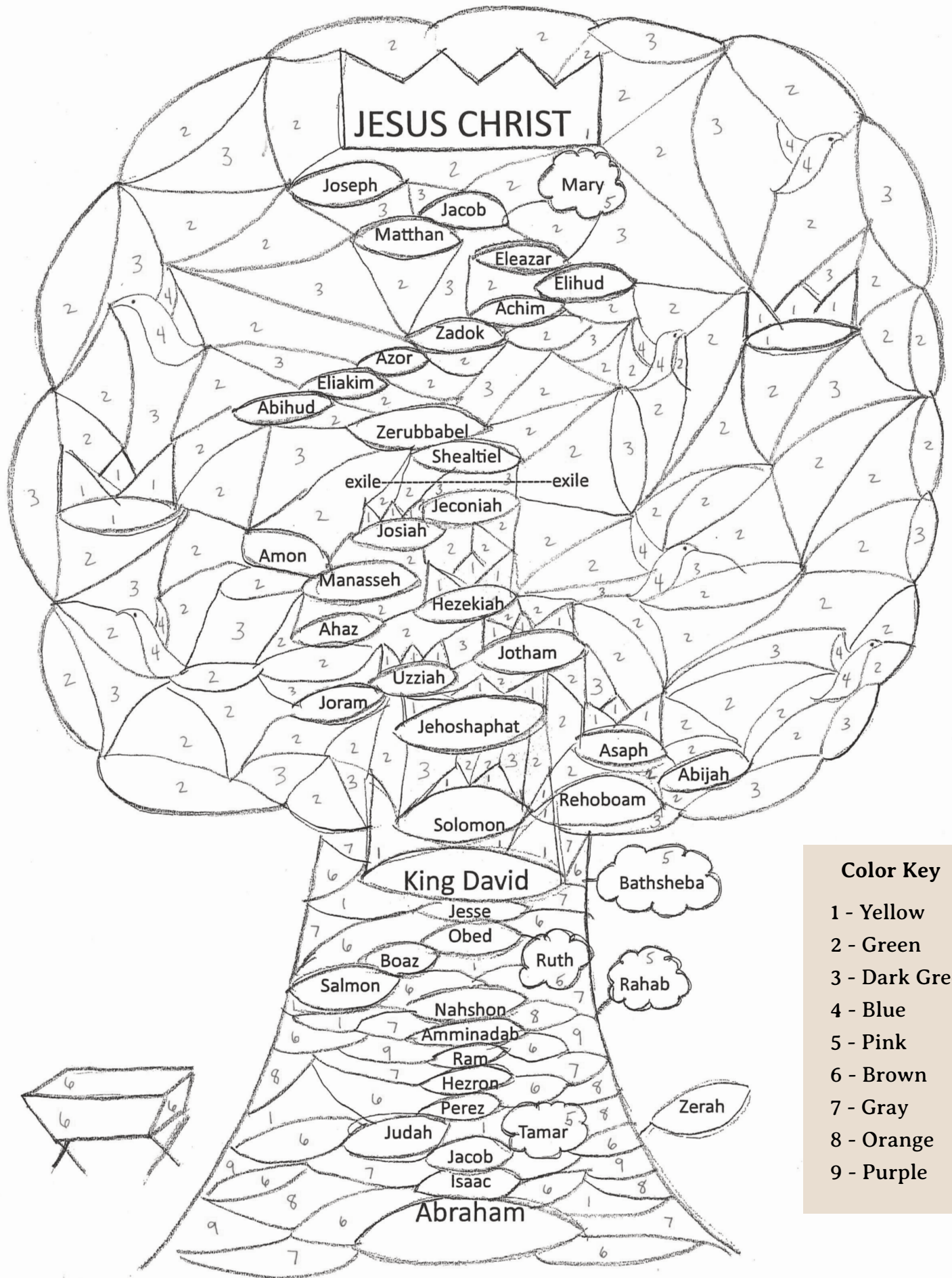
Star

Twinkling Wreath

3 Deer in Yard

Sleigh





Color Key

- 1 - Yellow
- 2 - Green
- 3 - Dark Green
- 4 - Blue
- 5 - Pink
- 6 - Brown
- 7 - Gray
- 8 - Orange
- 9 - Purple

Enjoy this coloring sheet of Jesus' family lineage and look for the hidden pictures in the tree! Created and drawn by Deb MacKay.

Week 4 Christ

Luke 2:1-21

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they

spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.



December Event Schedule

December 3	First Sunday of Advent
December 5 6:30-8:30pm	Women's Christmas Event
December 9 8:30am 9:00am	Frosting Fest <i>Breakfast hosted by Men's Ministry</i> <i>Activities hosted by FACKids</i>
December 10 6:00pm	Boomer's Christmas Celebration
December 13 6:30-8:30	Middle School & High School Christmas Parties
December 24 9:30am, 11:00am, 3:30pm, & 5:00pm	Christmas Eve Candlelight Services <i>All 4 services are identical. Nursery available up to age 2 for all services. No other ministries or classes will meet.</i>
December 31 9:30 & 11:00am	New Year's Eve Services <i>Service of worship, communion, and reflection. All Next Gen and adult ministries will be offered at their usual schedule.</i>

Check faclex.com for the most up-to-date information on all events.
Inclement weather notices are also posted at faclex.com.

Our mission is to passionately pursue
God, extend life-changing hope, and
disciple people to be Spirit-empowered
followers of Jesus.

faclex.com

(859)223-1394

info@faclex.com

2201 Old Higbee Mill Road, Lexington, KY 40514