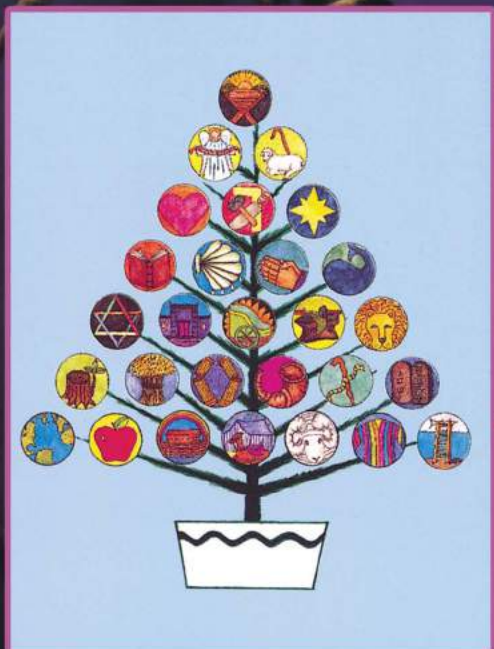


Jesse Tree Kit

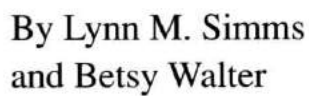
**An Advent Project
for Family, Classroom,
or Parish**



Includes 2 options:

- **Preparation of an actual Tree, with pre-drawn ornaments to cut out and decorate**
- **Tree poster instructions (poster provided)**

An Advent Project for Family, Classroom, or Parish



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The Story of the Jesse Tree

The symbol of the Jesse Tree comes from Isaiah 11: “The royal line of David is like a tree that has been cut down; but just as new branches sprout from a stump, so a new king will arise from among David’s descendants.” The tree is named after Jesse, the father of the great King David of the Old Testament.

In Church art a design developed which illustrated the relationship of Jesus with Jesse and other biblical personages. This design showed a branched tree growing from a reclining figure of Jesse. The various branches had pictures of other Old and New Testament figures who were ancestors of Jesus. Some trees also incorporated early Old Testament figures like Abraham and Moses, who lived long before Jesse’s time. At the top of the tree were images of Mary and Jesus. This design was used mostly in stained glass windows in some of the great medieval cathedrals of Europe.

Another development in religious art during the Middle Ages was that of Mystery Plays—drama that depicted various Bible stories or lives of saints and martyrs. These plays were performed in churches as part of the liturgical celebrations. One such play was based on the biblical account of the fall of Adam and Eve. The “Tree of Life” used during the play was decorated with apples. (Quite possibly this is also the forerunner of our own Christmas tree.)

This kit draws from elements of both the Jesse Tree window and the Tree of Life. Each ornament symbolizes a person or event in *salvation history*—the pattern of events in human history that accomplishes the saving action of God. By reflecting on salvation history, we see how God prepared the world for the coming of his Son.

Jesse Trees are meant to symbolize the spiritual heritage of Jesus, rather than his strictly genealogical origins. It is important to keep in mind that the Christian application of the Old Testament stories and symbols used does not minimize their own intrinsic value as Revelation.

Your Own Jesse Tree

The Jesse Tree is a very versatile project. It may be used by parents to highlight the true meaning of Christmas for their children. Teachers may wish to incorporate the Jesse Tree into their religious instruction classes during the Advent Season. The Jesse Tree tradition can also be adapted for a parish-wide celebration. Each week’s symbols and Scripture readings can be copied and distributed to all the children of the parish to be worked on at home. The children can participate in the Advent services by bringing their completed ornaments to church, where they can be used to decorate a large Jesse Tree set up in the sanctuary or other appropriate area.

It will take planning and work from each family member or student to make your own Jesse Tree. The needed materials are usually found around most homes and classrooms.

First of all, you will need a Bible. If very young children will be involved, a Bible picture storybook will help them understand the biblical stories used.

This kit offers you two options. *Option 1* involves preparing an actual tree and decorating pre-drawn ornaments—one for each day of Advent. Please see page 5 for *Option 1* instructions.

Option 2 provides you with a Jesse Tree poster to which the ornaments may be attached. It is especially suitable for use in settings with limited space. Please turn to page 6 for *Option 2* instructions.

Once your ornaments are made you may wish to use the prayer service on page 13 for the hanging ceremony.

Be creative, have fun and enjoy your Jesse Tree. It’s a beautiful way to share in the retelling of the greatest story of all!

OPTION 1

Jesse Tree with Pre-Drawn Ornaments

The tree itself can be one of several types. A small evergreen tree—live or artificial—works fine, as does a tree branch (suggestive of a family tree) that is anchored in a bucket or a large can of sand or gravel. The tree branch looks particularly attractive if painted white and sprinkled with silver glitter while the paint is still wet.

At the back of this book, you will find twenty-eight symbol/ornaments, one for every day of Advent. (Note: The length of the Advent Season varies from year to year. The longest Advent can be is twenty-eight days, the shortest, twenty-one days. The choice of which ornaments to exclude when Advent is less than twenty-eight days is left up to parents and teachers.) Each ornament represents a person or event in biblical history, from creation to the birth of Jesus. Seven ornament designs are arranged on each of four pages for easy photocopying. This format meets the needs of teachers who gather with their students only once a week. Each group of seven symbols can be covered during one of the four classes in Advent. Beginning on page 7 you will find a biblical passage and brief explanation to accompany every ornament.

To decorate the ornaments you will need crayons, markers, paints, or colored pencils. For use on a tree, both sides of the ornaments will need to be colored in. Use a paper punch to make a hole at the top of each ornament. Use ribbon or yarn (preferably purple) to hang the ornaments on your tree.



FOR OPTION 1

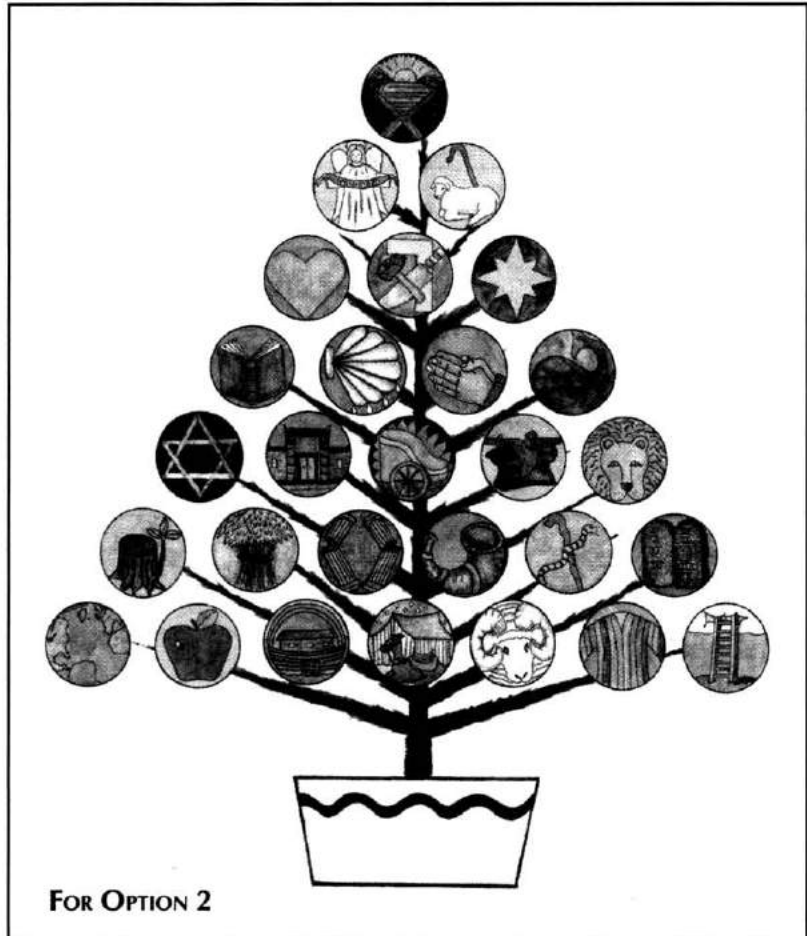
OPTION 2

Jesse Tree Poster with Pre-Drawn Ornaments

When you don't have room for an actual tree, the ornaments can be cut out, colored and taped or glued to the branches of the fold-out tree poster included in this kit. In this case, only the front sides of the ornaments need to be colored in. The numbered circles on the poster show the order in which to "hang" the ornaments—from the lowest branch to the Baby Jesus on top. If the activity is used at home, children can color in the ornaments while their parents read them the stories of how our ancestors waited for the Savior. As Christmas approaches, the tree poster will become progressively covered with the biblical symbols.

One final word on the symbols themselves: use them any way you wish. They may be colored with crayons, felt-tip markers, colored pencils or embellished in any way you choose. You can glue them to cardboard to make them more durable or cover them with clear contact paper and preserve them from year to year. For those who are even more ambitious, the designs can

also be used as a pattern to transfer the symbols to wood or felt.



The First Week of Advent

Scripture Verses

The symbols for our Jesse Tree start with the first stories found in the Bible—God's creation of the world and of Adam and Eve. Next is the wonderful story of Noah and his ark full of animals.

The saga of God's chosen people begins with the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's concern for his people is expressed again through the story of Joseph and his coat of many colors.

1. *Creation*—Read Genesis 1:26–31

In the beginning...God created the universe, the sun, moon, and stars. He created our beautiful world and filled it with all kinds of plants and animals. Last of all he created the first man and woman. This was the beginning of the human family, the original source of everyone's family tree.

2. *Adam and Eve*—Read Genesis 3:1–7

The first man and woman God created were Adam and Eve and he set them in the Garden of Eden. They were God's greatest creations because he gave them a mind to know the difference between good and evil, a will to make choices with, and a soul that would live forever. But they disobeyed God by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and God banished them from paradise.

3. *Noah*—Read Genesis 6:11–22; 9:8–13

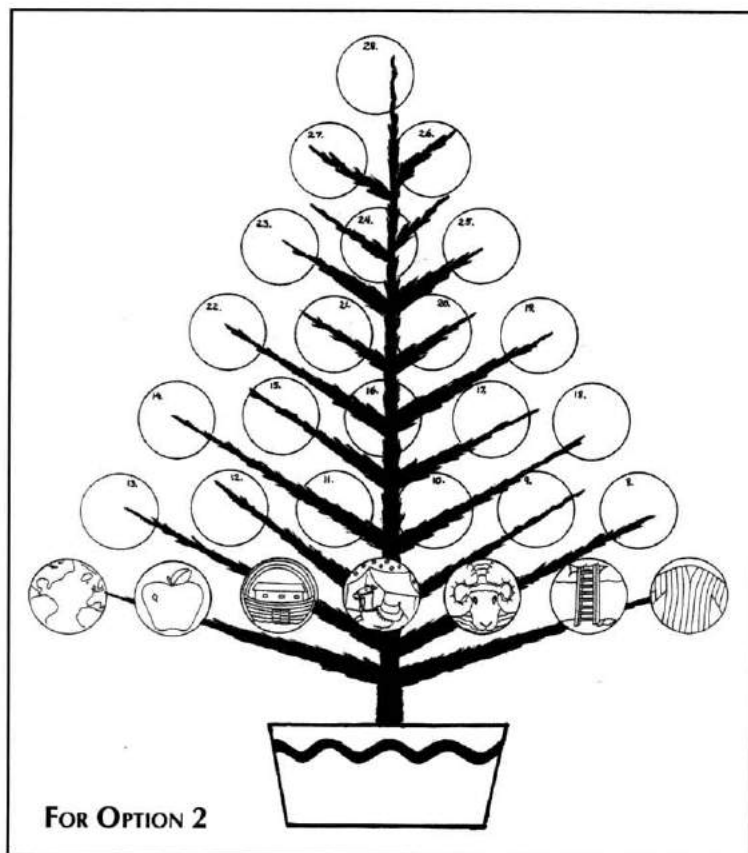
Many generations after Adam, when all the people had turned away from God, there lived a man named Noah. Because Noah was good and obeyed God, God saw to it that he and his family and all the animals he had gathered onto his ark would survive the great flood God was sending to remove all evildoers from the earth and give the world a new beginning.

4. *Abraham and Sarah*—Read Genesis 12:1–7 and Hebrews 11:8

The history of God's chosen people begins with Abraham and Sarah. In faith Abraham obeyed God's command to leave his home country. He left not knowing where he would go. But he believed that God would fulfill his promise to give him a new land and descendants as numerous as the stars.

5. *Isaac and Rebecca*— Read Genesis 22:1–7

When Abraham was an old man, his faith was finally rewarded with the birth of a son, Isaac. It seemed God's promise of making him the father of a great nation was to be fulfilled. But then one day God told Abraham to take Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice. Abraham loved his son but he trusted God. At the last moment God stopped him and provided a ram to be killed in Isaac's place.



6. *Jacob and Rachel*—Read Genesis 28:10–22

One of Isaac's sons was Jacob. One day Jacob had a dream. He saw a ladder stretching from earth to heaven with angels going up and down it. In the dream God told Jacob he would become the father of a great people with a land of their own. From Jacob's twelve sons came the people of Israel, the people from which Jesus came.

7. *Joseph*—Read Genesis 37:1–4

Jacob's favorite son was Joseph, and one day he gave him a coat of many colors. Joseph's eleven brothers were jealous, and so they kidnapped him and sold him into slavery in Egypt. There, with God looking after him, Joseph rose to a position of power. Later, during a famine in that part of the world, Jacob, along with Joseph's repentant brothers and their families, came to live in Egypt where Joseph had stored enough food for them all.

The Second Week of Advent

Our first symbol for the second week of Advent represents Moses, the leader of the Jewish people during their great exodus from slavery in Egypt. He was helped in this endeavor by his brother Aaron. The story of their search for the Promised Land continued with Joshua and the battle of Jericho. Later, God again intervened by sending his people Samson, a leader of incredible strength.

The symbols for our tree continue with the beautiful story of Ruth and her grandson Jesse, after whom this tree is named. The final symbol is that of the greatest Jewish king, David, in whose line Jesus was to be born.

8. *Moses*—Read Exodus 20:1–17

It was during the time when the people of Israel had become slaves in Egypt that God saved the life of a little Hebrew baby who was placed in a basket among the reeds of a river. The baby was Moses, and when he was grown, God chose him to lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt and slavery. In the desert on the way to the Promised Land, Moses climbed Mount Sinai. There God gave him the Ten Commandments, the laws God wants us all to obey.

9. *Aaron*—Read Exodus 5:22, 11:5

God told Moses to let his brother Aaron speak for him in trying to persuade the Pharaoh to let the Hebrew people leave Egypt. To show how powerful his God was, Aaron threw down his rod before the Pharaoh and it became a serpent, swallowing up the serpents that had been produced by the Pharaoh's magicians and sorcerers.

10. *Joshua*—Read Joshua 6:20

Moses died before he got to the Promised Land, and Joshua was appointed the new



leader of the Hebrew people. Joshua planned to capture the city of Jericho. He ordered the Israelites to march around the city seven times. Then, when the priests blew their trumpets and the people shouted, the walls of the mighty city fell.

11. **Samson**—Read Judges 16:21–30

Years later, the Israelites became enslaved by the Philistines, and God sent them a new leader with incredible strength, Samson. After winning many victories for his people, Samson was tricked and captured. Taken to the pagan temple of the Philistines, Samson stood between two pillars and knocked them down, causing the destruction of the temple and all the Philistines who were inside it.

12. **Ruth**—Read Ruth 1:15–18

The symbol of gathered wheat stands for Ruth who collected grain from the fields of an Israelite farmer in Bethlehem. She was a foreigner who had married a Hebrew, and after his death she took care of his mother Naomi and remained faithful to his God. Later she married the farmer in whose fields she worked, and God rewarded her goodness by sending her a son, Obed. Obed became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of the great Jewish king David.

13. **Jesse**—Read Isaiah 11:1–2

Many years after Jesse lived, the prophet Isaiah would foretell the coming of the Messiah and would trace Jesus' ancestry back to Jesse. "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." And so it was in the family line of Jesse that Jesus Christ was born in fulfillment of the prophecies.

14. **David**—Read Samuel 5:1–5

The star of David has come to represent the nation of Israel. As a shepherd boy, David's faith in God enabled him to slay the giant Goliath. Later he became a king and ruled Jerusalem for thirty-three years. He was a great king because he trusted God and tried to obey him. David made some mistakes, but he continued to turn to God for forgiveness and guidance, and Israel became a strong nation under his leadership.

The Third Week of Advent

The Jesse Tree symbols for the third week of Advent start with the wise King Solomon. He is followed by two great prophets, Elijah, who was carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire, and Isaiah, who foretold the birth of Jesus.

God again reveals his loving concern for us in the stories of Daniel, who was spared death in the lions' den, and Jonah, who survived three days in the belly of a whale.

As we approach the time of Jesus, we learn the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist. John was the prophet who preached the coming of the Messiah and baptized Jesus himself.

15. **Solomon**—Read 1 Kings 3:3–14

Solomon followed his father, David, as king of Israel. God had offered Solomon anything he wished for and was pleased when instead of riches or glory Solomon asked for wisdom to rule his kingdom. Solomon is also remembered for the beautiful temple he built for God in Jerusalem. The temple served the people of Israel as the central place of worship for over 350 years.

16. **Elijah**—Read 2 Kings 2:11–18

The prophet Elijah lived 900 years before Jesus at a time when Israel was ruled by weak kings, and the people worshipped false gods. God gave Elijah much spiritual power to convince the Israelites to return to their true God. When his job on earth was done, God sent a chariot of fire that swept Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind.