



## THE JESSE TREE / THE CHRISTMAS TREE

From St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Ingersoll, Ontario  
(An "It's-Not-too-Late" Idea for Advent and Christmas)

### Prior to the Event

- Prepare a Jesse tree (plain branch in a bucket of sand)
- Prepare a Christmas tree (evergreen tree in tree stand)
- Invite children, youth and/or adults to colour prepared symbols to hang on the trees
- Ask groups of participants to practice the reading parts

### A Musical Gathering

Call to Worship: Christ is coming. Christ is here!  
Let us sing a song of cheer.

Carol: *Joy to the World*

### B The Jesse Tree and the Christmas Tree

#### Reader 1: The Jesse Tree

The Christmas season has a special tree to give the season beauty and meaning. Advent has a special tree, too—the Jesse Tree. It is a bare tree to remind us that God can take something that seems bare and dead and make new life.

But who was Jesse? Jesse was the father of King David. St. Matthew begins his Gospel with the words, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David." St. Luke is also careful to say that Joseph was "of the house and lineage of David," and it was for that reason that he went to Bethlehem, the city of David, for the census. It was there that Jesus was born.

The Jesse Tree is a kind of family tree of Jesus. During Advent we place on the Jesse tree symbols of the important events and important people from the Old Testament that led up to the birth of Jesus.

## **Reader 2: The Christmas Tree**

At Christmas, the promise of the Old Testament is fulfilled. The bare branch of the Jesse Tree gives way to the glory and beauty of the Christmas tree, just as the Old Testament points to the new covenant at the coming of Christ. The symbols of Jesus' life fill the Christmas tree and shine like heavenly lights.

### **C     Symbols**

#### **Symbols of creation and new creation: The earth and the star**

Class reading: In the beginning, God made the earth  
                  And saw that it was good.  
                  After the sinning God sent a star  
                  To tell of Jesus' birth.

*(Earth symbols are hung on the Jesse tree; stars on the Christmas tree)*

Carol:            "Silent night, Holy night"

#### **Symbols of promise and hope: The rainbow and the angel**

Class reading:     The colourful rainbow showed the way  
                          To the life that God had promised  
                          The angels sang "Glory to God"  
                          Christ's hope is now among us.

*(Rainbow symbols are hung on the Jesse tree; angels on the Christmas tree)*

Carol:            "Hark! The herald angels sing"

#### **Symbols of care and sacrifice: The shepherd's crook and the sheep**

Class reading:     King David sang of a shepherd's care  
                          God's people joined the chorus  
                          The shepherds came to Jesus' birth  
                          Proclaiming "God is for us."

*(Shepherd's crook symbols are hung on the Jesse tree; sheep on the Christmas tree)*

Carol: "While shepherds watched their flocks"

**Symbols of giving and receiving: Joseph's coat of many colours and the wise men's gifts**

Class reading: Jacob's gift showed a father's love  
In colours bright and fair  
The wise men's gifts, fit for a king  
Were an offering oh so rare.

*(Joseph's coat is hung on the Jesse tree; wise men's gifts on the Christmas tree)*

Carol: "The first Nowell"

**Symbols of love and compassion: The rose and the cross**

Class reading: Isaiah spoke of God's great love  
Like a rose blooming in the sand  
Christ Jesus came to share God's love  
With people in every land.

*(The rose is hung on the Jesse tree; crosses on the Christmas tree)*

Carol: "Go tell it on the mountain"

**Symbols of revelation and resurrection: The burning bush and the alpha-omega**

Class reading: Moses knelt by the burning bush  
To listen, wait and pray  
Christ is coming—Christ is here  
This child will lead the way.

*(The burning bush is hung on the Jesse tree; the alpha-omega sign on the Christmas tree)*

Carol: "Away in a manger"