

10 Tips for Marking Advent in School



1. Have an Advent wreath in school to mark the weeks of Advent.

This is a tangible and visible way to mark the journey the church takes through the season of Advent. There are four candles (usually purple), one candle is lit each Sunday of Advent, if one of the candles is pink, it is lit on the third Sunday of Advent. You can use traditional prayers (ask your rector/ minister for these) or choose the themes of hope, peace, love and joy for the four candles.

2. Create your own digital Advent calendar - ask each class to take responsibility for a number of days in Advent and make a short recording or digital slide to be shown in class each day.

You can also ask your rector/ teachers/ other staff members/ secretary/ caretaker/ one or more school parents to record a message relating to Advent which could form part of the Advent calendar. You can include the key Bible stories/ some verses from carols/ hymns/ a prayer / insight into Christmas in another country – there are so many possibilities.

3. Hold a school assembly with a focus on the theme of Advent so everything during December is not focused on 25th December only.

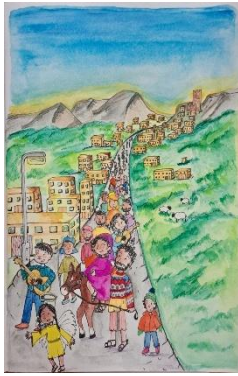
There are a number of assemblies on the website and on <https://www.dcu.ie/church-of-ireland-centre/assemblies-for-schools>

4. Teach the lessons from the Follow Me programme - the lessons are planned to be short. Make sure every child hears the Nativity story in RE class. Don't assume they know the whole story or that participating in a play ticks that outcome.

Evidence has shown that children get muddled up about the story when they are only exposed to fictionalised/ dramatised versions of the story. It is a key story for Christianity.

5. There are lots of Christmas traditions in different countries in the world, explore these with children of different nationalities in your school community – but be careful not to over generalize.

Some traditions are not as widespread as online resources may suggest.



6. Consider an Advent project such as the Posada pack where Mary and Joseph travel from class to class/ home to home. A resource pack is available on the website.

This is an easy yet engaging resource which grounds Advent in the story of the journey of Mary and Joseph.

7. Think of ways to engage with the Christmas story through play in the junior classrooms – for example nativity play costumes for Aistear, crib for playing and re-telling the story.

Using play pedagogies to engage with big stories is a valuable way to enable the children to learn about the story.

8. Display a crib in the school. As a church school this is part of the story of the ethos of the school.

Whether old or new/ crafted/ knitted or moulded from clay, the simple crib tells the profound story of the birth of Jesus. A variety of cribs in different classrooms reminds us that we have no images of the event.

9. When planning a Christmas play/ nativity consider how true to the story the words are.....Love Actually (2003) is a yearly reminder that there was no lobster in the Bible story!

This may be the only time parents and children hear the story of the Nativity. Authentic encounter is very important.

10. Don't be slow to choose the traditional Christmas carols and hymns – O Come all ye faithful, Silent Night etc. They do reflect the yearly retelling of the Christmas story and link well with what is going on in churches and cathedrals in the lead up to Christmas.



You can of course choose one or two verses from longer songs/ hymns/ carols rather than sing all the verses.