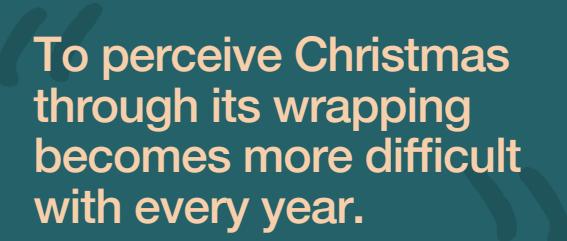


Prepare THE WAY

advent
guide



To perceive Christmas
through its wrapping
becomes more difficult
with every year.

E.B. White



The **MEANING**

OF

Advent

What does “advent” mean? Is it a word that conjures up nostalgic memories or one that seems abstract? Unsurprisingly, the word comes from the Latin word “adventus,” meaning “coming,” which in turn is a translation of the Greek word “parousia,” which is most commonly used in the context of the Second Coming of Christ. The advent of Christmas is intrinsically connected to our eager anticipation not just of Christmas Day, but of the second advent of Christ as well. All aspects of Christmas should draw us closer and more intimately into God’s embrace, and our hope is that this booklet will do just that! We encourage you to gather weekly with family or friends, before or after a meal or just dessert, and celebrate Advent. Light a candle, read the Scripture and poems, sing a song together, talk about the discussion questions, and pray together as you prepare your hearts to celebrate Christ’s first coming...and His next! Let your relationship with Jesus grow this Advent Season as you make Him the focal point of the days leading up to Christmas.

ent



WEEK 1

Prophecy

LIGHT THE PROPHECY CANDLE

Prophecy: Telling ahead of time what will happen in the future

“Celebrating Advent means being able to wait.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus **226**

Charles Wesley, 1744

HYFRYDOL
87 87 DRowland H. Prichard, 1830
arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906, alt.

1. Come, Thou long - ex - pect - ed Je - sus, born to set Thy peo - ple free;
 2. Joy to those who long to see Thee, Day-spring from on high, ap - pear;
 3. Come to earth to taste our sad - ness, He whose glo - ries knew no end;
 4. Born Thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a King,

from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in Thee.
 come, Thou prom - ised Rod of Jes - se, of Thy birth we long to hear!
 by His life He brings us glad - ness, our Re - deem - er, Shep - herd, Friend,
 born to reign in us for - ev - er, now Thy gra - cious king - dom bring.

Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth Thou art,
 O'er the hills the an - gels sing - ing news, glad tid - ings of a birth:
 Leav - ing rich - es with - out num - ber, born with-in a cat - tle stall;
 By Thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;

dear De - sire of eve - ry na - tion, joy of eve - ry long-ing heart.
 "Go to Him, your prais - es bring - ing; Christ the Lord has come to earth,"
 this the ev - er - last - ing won - der, Christ was born the Lord of all,
 by Thine own e - ter - nal mer - it, raise us to Thy glo - rious throne.

Sing
TOGETHER

READ
Aloud



“ And again Isaiah says, ‘The root of Jesse will come even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.’ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

ROMANS 15:12-13

CHRISTMAS EVE

Christina Rossetti

Christmas hath a darkness
Brighter than the blazing noon,
Christmas hath a chillness
Warmer than the heat of June,
Christmas hath a beauty
Lovelier than the world can show:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.

Earth, strike up your music,
Birds that sing and bells that ring;
Heaven hath answering music
For all Angels soon to sing:
Earth, put on your whitest
Bridal robe of spotless snow:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.

For Young Families

GOD CHOSE ISAIAH TO GIVE A VERY SPECIAL LETTER TO HIS PEOPLE. HERE'S WHAT IT SAID:

Dear Ones,

You are all like little lost sheep, who have wandered far from Me, but that doesn't mean I don't love you. I can't stop loving you. So, I am sending you a Shepherd, who will love you and take care of you. This Shepherd will light your way back to Me. He will come to you as a little baby. He will be called Emmanuel, which means "God has come to live with us." He will be your Rescuer, but He won't be the type of champion everyone expects. He will be a King, but He won't live like one. Instead, He will act like a Servant. He will be a Hero, but He won't fight like one. Instead, He will heal people and mend their broken hearts. People will hate Him. He will suffer and die because that's the only way I can get

you back. But He won't stay dead! I will bring Him back to life! One day, He will come back to rule forever, and the whole earth will be glad because He will take away all sorrow and pain, even death! Look for Him. Wait for Him. He will come. I promise.

Love, God

*-- Paraphrased and abridged from
The Jesus Storybook Bible*



Adult DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What does Rossetti imply about preparing oneself for the long expected Advent?
- 2 How does Romans 15:12 fill you with hope and excite you for the Advent celebration?
- 3 Contemplate Christ's purpose in coming to earth as noted in the hymn. What should we be doing as a result?

Family DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Talk about a time when someone promised you something, but you had to wait for it.
- 2 How did you feel while you were waiting? What did you think about until it happened?
- 3 Isaiah, the prophet, promised people that God would send them a savior... but the people waited 700 years until He came! How do you think they felt? What do you think they thought about?
- 4 We are waiting for Christmas Day – to celebrate that Jesus was born and that He's coming again! What can we do as a family to help us think more about Jesus while we wait for Christmas Day?

PRAY
Togeth

PRAISE GOD

for being FAITHFUL –
a God we can count on to
always fulfill His promises

CONFESS

that even now, as we wait for
Jesus's second coming, we
sometimes live and act as if
he won't return

THANK HIM

for fulfilling Isaiah's
prophecy and sending
Jesus to us to give us
HOPE for the forgiveness
of our sins

ASK

God to fill us with joyful
expectation as we wait to
celebrate Christmas...and
wait for His return

WEEK 2

Bethlehem

LIGHT THE BETHLEHEM & PROPHECY CANDLES

Bethlehem: The birthplace of Jesus

“Humility is nothing but the disappearance
of self in the vision that God is all.”

Andrew Murray

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

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Latin hymn, 12th cent.
trans. J.M. Neale, 1851VENI EMMANUEL
88 88 88Latin hymn, 13th cent.
adapt. Thomas Helmore, 1854

1. O come, O come, En - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
 2. O come, Thou Rod of Jes - se, free Thine own from Sa - tan's
 3. O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer our spir - its by Thine
 4. O come, Thou Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen wide our

Is - - - ra - el, that mourns in low - ly ex - ile here,
 tyr - - - an - ny; from depths of hell Thy peo - ple save,
 ad - - - vent here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,
 heav'n - - - ly home; make safe the way that leads on high,

un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
 and give them vic - 'try o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!
 and death's dark shad - ows put to flight.

Em - man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - - - ra - el.

Sing
TOGETHER

READ
Aloud



But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the
clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be
ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

MICAH 5:2

MOONLESS DARKNESS STANDS BETWEEN

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Moonless darkness stands between.
Past, the Past, no more be seen!
But the Bethlehem-star may lead me
To the sight of Him Who freed me
From the self that I have been.
Make me pure, Lord: Thou art holy;
Make me meek, Lord: Thou wert lowly;
Now beginning, and always:
Now begin, on Christmas day.

For Young Families

Mary was about to give birth to the Baby Jesus, but she and Joseph had to take a trip to Bethlehem, which is where Joseph's family was from, going back to his great-great-great-great grandfather, King David.

When Joseph and Mary reached Bethlehem, they couldn't find anywhere to stay. All the inns were full. Mary's baby was ready to be born. Where could Joseph take Mary so that Baby Jesus could be born?

The only place Joseph could find was a stable, where the animals slept. So, in the stable, with horses and donkeys and cows and all the other animals, God's Son was born.

Mary and Joseph wrapped the newborn baby in cloth and put him in a feeding trough filled with soft hay, and they looked in amazement at God's Greatest Gift.

They named Him Jesus, "Emmanuel," which means "God has come to live with us."

Because He had!

*-- Paraphrased and abridged from
The Jesus Storybook Bible*



Adult DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How does the very city in which Christ was born (Micah 5:2) begin to paint a picture of His character (think in terms of both humility and nobility)?
- 2 Again, we are reminded of why Jesus came and why that makes this Advent Season so celebratory. Talk about all the reasons mentioned in the hymn for His coming.
- 3 What do you want God to change in you this advent season?

Family DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe a king: What does he wear? What does he live in? How do people treat him?
- 2 Jesus, the King of all Kings, wasn't born in a big, royal city, but in a little town called Bethlehem. What else about the way Jesus was born is different from how you would expect a king to come into the world?
- 3 Jesus came into the world humbly – He didn't make a big deal about how important He was. Instead, He wanted everyone in the whole world to know how important they are to God. How can we help others know how important they are to God this Advent Season?

PRAY
Togeth

Y
her

PRAISE GOD

for being the King of All
Kings, whose Kingdom
will never end

THANK HIM

for allowing us to be a part
of His everlasting Kingdom
through the gift of His one
and only Son, Jesus

CONFESS

how often we fall into the
temptation of making ourselves
appear important in the eyes of
others according to the
temporal values of this world,
not His kingdom

ASK

God to help us follow Jesus
in humility and to make others
more important than ourselves
as we walk through the Advent
Season, even if it means giving
up what looks important in this
world. Celebrate Christmas...
and wait for His return!



WEEK 3

Shepherds Joy

LIGHT THE SHEPHERDS, BETHLEHEM & PROPHECY CANDLES

Joy: Great delight or happiness caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying

“Joy is the serious business of Heaven.”
C.S. Lewis

Sing TOGETHER

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Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

CHARLES WESLEY

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY
ARR. BY WILLIAM H. CUMMINGS

1. Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born King;
 2. Christ, by high-est Heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord:
 3. Hail the Heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of right-eous-ness!
 4. Come, De - sire of na - tions, come! Fix in us Thy hum - ble home:

Peace on earth, and mer - cy mild; God and sin - ners rec - on-ciled." Late in time be-hold Him come, Off - spring of a vir-gin's womb. Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with heal - ing in His wings: Rise, the wom-an's con-qu'ring seed, Bruise in us the ser - pent's head;

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies; Veiled in flesh the God-head see, Hail th'in-car-nate De - i - ty! Mild He lays His glo - ry by, Born that man no more may die; Ad - am's like - ness now ef - face, Stamp Thine im-age in its place:

With an - gel - ic hosts pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem." Pleased as man with men to ap - pear, Je - sus our Im - man - uel here. Born to raise the sons of earth; Born to give them sec - ond birth. Sec - ond Ad - am from a - bove, Re - in - state us in Thy love.

“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 went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

LUKE 2:8-15

READ Aloud

THE HOUSE OF CHRISTMAS

G. K. Chesterton

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.

The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide
and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay on their heads in a
foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honour and
high surprise,
But our homes are under
miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun

A Child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam;
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads
that know,
But our hearts we lost - how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the sky's dome.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the
wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and
that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.

For Young Families

The same night Baby Jesus was born, a shiny new star appeared in the sky. God put it there to tell the whole world that His Son had been born. The star pointed to the spot where Jesus was born.

But that's not all God did. He also sent a big choir of angels to sing a happy song so that everyone would know that Jesus had been born.

God loves everyone. So He sent His choir of angels to sing to shepherds, who were out in the fields.

God could have sent His choir to the king, but He chose to announce Jesus' birth to the kind of men that many people looked down on.

Most people would not have thought shepherds would be worthy of getting such good news.

Pretend you are one of those shepherds. You are alone with your sheep. It's dark and quiet. And all of a sudden the sky is bright with beautiful angels singing to you!

-- *Paraphrased and abridged from The Jesus Storybook Bible*



Adult DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did the shepherds want to “see this thing that has happened”?
- 2 As they listened to the heraldic message from the angels, what was going through the minds of the shepherds? What could it connect to for them and what does it connect to for you?
- 3 What does “Only where He was homeless / Are you and I at home” mean to you? Why?

Family DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Have you ever been told some really great news? What was it?
- 2 What did you do after you heard the news?
- 3 In Jesus’s day, shepherds were a raggedy bunch of smelly nobodies. Why do you think that God chose them to be the very first people to get to hear the great news about Jesus being born?
- 4 Who do you know that needs to hear and understand the great news about why Jesus came? Pray for them as a family. Now, how about inviting them over for ice cream?

PRAY
Togeth

PRAISE GOD

for being our source
of great joy

CONFESS

that at times we overlook and
mistreat the “shepherds” of our
city – the lowly and seemingly
unimportant

THANK HIM

for sending Jesus not just
for “important” people –
but for all people

ASK

God to help us love all people
with His unstoppable

WEEK 4

Angels

**LIGHT THE ANGELS, SHEPHERDS,
BETHLEHEM & PROPHECY CANDLES**

Angel: A messenger of God

“Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

Psalm 148:2

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

38

CAROL CMD

Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1849

Richard Storrs Willis, 1850

1. It came up-on the mid-night clear, That glo - rious song of old,
 2. Still through the clo - ven skies they come, With peace-ful wings un - furled,
 3. And ye, be-neath life's crush-ing load, Whose forms are bend-ing low,
 4. For lo, the days are has-tening on, By proph-et bards fore - told,

From an - gels bend - ing near the earth, To touch their harps of gold:
 And still their heaven-ly mu - sic floats O'er all the wea - ry world:
 Who toil a - long the climb-ing way With pain - ful steps and slow,
 When with the ev - er - cir - cling years Comes round the age of gold;

"Peace on the earth, good will to all, From heaven's all - gra - cious King":
 A - bove its sad and low - ly plains They bend on hov - ering wing,
 Look now! for glad and gold-en hours Come swift - ly on the wing:
 When peace shall o - ver all the earth Its an - cient splen-dors fling,

The world in sol - emn still-ness lay, To hear the an - gels sing.
 And ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds The bless-ed an - gels sing.
 O rest be - side the wea - ry road, And hear the an - gels sing.
 And the whole world give back the song Which now the an - gels sing.

Sing
TOGETHER

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

JOHN 3:16-17

READ Aloud



IN MEMORIAM [RING OUT, WILD BELLS]

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Ring out, wild bells,
to the wild sky,
The flying cloud,
the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells,
and let him die.
Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells,
across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false,
ring in the true.
Ring out the grief
that saps the mind
For those that here
we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out false pride
in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.
Ring out old shapes
of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing
lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand
wars of old,
Ring in the thousand
years of peace.
Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart,
the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness
of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

For Young Families

Remember how you pretended to be a shepherd? Let's pretend some more.

You are a shepherd who has just had a whole choir of angels sing to you about Jesus' birth. Now, one of those bright, shining angels is standing right in front of you!

He says, "Don't be afraid, shepherd. I've got the best news the world has ever heard! Today, God's own Son has been born in Bethlehem, and you get to go see Him! You will find Him in a manger."

Now, imagine that behind the angel, a big glowing cloud of angels appears. There are so many angels you can't count them all, and they are singing

the most beautiful song you've ever heard. They are singing, "Glory to God! Everyone should praise God because of what He has done!"

As quickly as the angels appeared, they disappear, and you and the other shepherds are so excited by what you saw and heard that you leave sheep in the field and you go to find Baby Jesus.

-- Paraphrased and abridged from The Jesus Storybook Bible



Adult DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is significant about celebrating Advent at the end of each year?
- 2 The angels brought a message of hope. How does John 3:16-17 expand upon their initial message in Luke 2:10-12?
- 3 How does the poem connect with the hymn and the message of John 3:16-17?

Family DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 When you were born, how did your parents announce to everyone that you had arrived? If you don't know, ask your parents!
- 2 When Jesus was born, God didn't use a fancy card or social media to announce it. Why do you think He chose angels to announce it?
- 3 When the angels announced Jesus's birth, they filled the dark sky with light and sang songs about how God is greater than anything! As a family, make a list of things you think are really great. Now, thank God that He is better than all of them put together! And since that's true, why not sing a praise song to God as a family? God will love it, no matter what it sounds like!

PRAY
Togeth

PRAISE GOD

for being the **LIGHT** of
the world

CONFESS

quietly, anything in your
heart or mind that might
not be pleasing to Him

THANK HIM

that He came to save us,
not condemn us, so we
don't have to be afraid
of Him

ASK

Him to use you to reflect
His light in the world
this Christmas

WEEK 5

Christ

**LIGHT EVERY CANDLE INCLUDING
THE CENTER CHRIST CANDLE**

Savior: One who rescues or delivers

“For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Luke 2:11

Sing
TOGETHER

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God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

English carol, 18th century

GOD REST YOU MERRY: Irregular, with Refrain
English melody, 18th century
Har. in *Christmas Carols Old and New*, 1871

1. God rest you mer - ry, gen - tle-men, Let noth - ing you dis - may,
 2. From God our heaven-ly, Fa - ther A bless - ed an - gel came;
 3. "Fear not, then," said the an - gel, "Let noth - ing you af - right;
 4. Now to the Lord sing prais - es, All you with - in this place,

Re - mem - ber Christ our Sav - iour Was born on Christ-mas Day;
 And un - to cer - tain shep - herds Brought ti - dings of the same;
 This day is born a Sav - iour Of a pure Vir - gin bright;
 And with true love and broth-er-hood Each oth - er now em - brace.

To save us all from Sa - tan's power When we were gone a - stray.
 How that in Beth - le - hem was born The Son of God by name.
 To free all those who trust in Him From Sa - tan's power and might."
 This ho - ly tide of Christ - mas All oth - ers doth de - face.

REFRAIN

O ti - dings of com - fort and joy, Com - fort and joy;

O ti - dings of com - fort and joy. A - MEN.

JESUS CHRIST: HIS BIRTH

[152]

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

JOHN 1:5

READ Aloud



“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

HEBREWS 1:3

LOVE [|||]

George Herbert

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.

But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.

“A guest,” I answer'd, “worthy to be here”;
Love said, “You shall be he.”

“I, the unkind, the ungrateful? ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee.”

Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
“Who made the eyes but I?”

“Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.”

“And know you not,” says Love, “who bore the blame?”

“My dear, then I will serve.”

“You must sit down,” says Love, “and taste my meat.”
So I did sit and eat.

For Young Families

Far away from Bethlehem, three very smart men saw the star that God put in the sky to announce Jesus' birth. They were so excited! They had been waiting for this star because it announced the birth of a king!

The Wise Men wanted to give Baby Jesus the best gifts they could. So, they packed up the most expensive presents they could find, and they set out to find the Baby King.

The Wise Men traveled for a long, long time before they came to the country the star pointed to. Since the Wise Men knew a special king had been born, they went to the palace where King Herod lived. But, Jesus was not born in a palace.

King Herod's advisors told the Wise Men to look for Baby Jesus in Bethlehem. So, the wise men set off again. They followed the star to the dustiest, dirtiest part of the town, and that's where they found Him!

Jesus was a new kind of King. He had not come to be the boss. He had come to be the servant.

*-- Paraphrased and abridged from
The Jesus Storybook Bible*



Adult DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the significance of the feast as a setting in “Love (III)”?
- 2 Taking “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen,” John 1:5, Hebrews 1:3, and “Love (III)” altogether, what new things do you see about the nature and character of Christ?
- 3 What have you done this Advent Season to honor the Lord, specifically? What will you do going forward?

Family DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 The waiting is over – Christmas is here! Share about a favorite gift you received or are hoping for this Christmas.
- 2 When Jesus was born, he was God’s gift to the world – but he wasn’t exactly what people were expecting. How was Jesus different from what the Wise Men were expecting in a king?
- 3 The Wise Men gave Jesus the best treasures they could think of to show Him how important they thought He was. How can we show Jesus how important He is to us? What can we give Him?
- 4 As a family, think of one way you can serve someone in the next few weeks so they can understand how much Jesus loves and cares for them.

PRAY
Togeth

PRAISE GOD

as our King of Kings,
Lord of Lords, and
Ruler of All

CONFESS

any lack of gratitude
for His generous love,
grace and forgiveness

THANK HIM

for the best gift ever, our
Savior, Jesus Christ

ASK

Him to conform you
more into His image in
the coming year

Notes



GRACE
COMMUNITY
CHURCH