

PLANNING GUIDE

GOD *With Us*



HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR
ADVENT SERIES
AND CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE



GOD WITH US

Campaign Planning Guide

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INTRODUCTION

This Christmas, invite your church and community to experience the miracle of the gift of His presence—*God With Us*. During the season of Advent, the four weeks leading up to Christmas, dive into the meaning of hope, love, joy and peace. Everything changed on that unexpected first Christmas more than two thousand years ago. The trajectory of history, the future, even infinity, was transformed when God became man. Jesus the Son of God became the Son of Man, fully divine yet fully human. As the prophet Isaiah foretold long before, Jesus came to earth as Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14).

Advent is a season that is officially observed in many churches. The four weeks before Christmas are set aside as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of Jesus' birth. The term advent is a version of the Latin word which means "coming."

But Advent is not just an extension of Christmas, it is a season that links the past, present and future. Advent offers us the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah, to celebrate His birth, and to be alert for His second coming.

If you are planning on hosting the Christmas Eve service only, instead of the entire Advent series, you can use the information in this guide and apply it to planning and hosting your Christmas Eve service.

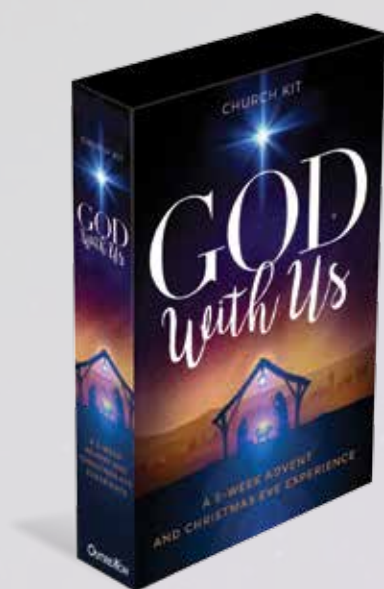
The kit contains everything you need to plan and host a powerful four-week series and Christmas Eve service based on the four Advent themes. That includes practical resources for reaching out to your community, promoting the series, and even complete sermons to take the pressure off during this busy season.

One of the most valuable pieces of the *God With Us* series is a gift book that you can provide for your church members and visitors. This book contains devotions for each of the 30 days based around the weekly Advent themes of hope, love, joy, and peace.

There is also one devotion for Christmas Eve and one for Christmas Day. In addition, each of the sections contains an introduction page with verses to memorize, a song to sing, and a verse to focus on throughout the week. We encourage your members to use these sections as a guide for a weekly lighting of their own Advent wreath. Whether done alone, as a family, with friends or a small group, taking the time to practice the tradition of the lighting of the candles will add to the richness of their Advent experience.

In a season often marked by frenzied busyness, Advent is an opportunity to set aside time to prepare our hearts. The tradition and the devotions in this book are designed to help us place our focus on a far greater story than our own—the story of God’s redeeming love for our world.

So no matter what the department stores try to tell us, Christmas has not yet arrived. There is value as well as excitement in patient, expectant waiting. May this be a season of wonder for your church as you discover the miracle of His presence this Christmas.



GETTING STARTED

The Church Kit gives you and your congregation the tools and insights you need to experience a meaningful Advent season, as a time to prepare our hearts to celebrate the coming of the ultimate gift, Jesus.

- Begin with prayer. Ask God to use this series to speak to you, your leadership team, and your church members.
- Read over all of the materials in the Church Kit and make notes about what you think will work best for your church.
 - Plan your Advent series. Read through the sermons provided in the kit, plan to show the promo video before the series begins, decide what messages and announcements you want to share, determine who will be involved in the series, and plan for special parts of the service such as the lighting of each week's Advent candle.

- Present the idea of the series as well as the overall promotion of the *God With Us* concept to your leadership team and ask them for insights and suggestions.
- Schedule a time to speak to small group leaders and present the materials to them. Ask for their input about what will benefit their group members, as well as ways they'd like to be involved in supporting the community outreach.
- Schedule a kick-off date to begin promoting your Advent series using your church bulletin, website, and social media sites.
- Show the promotional and invitation videos to your entire congregation and ask them to invite friends and family to attend the series.
- Collect comments from small groups and members of your congregation, asking them to share what Christmas means to them, and how they'd like to see the wonder of Christmas carried into the new year through your church.

WHAT'S INSIDE THE CHURCH KIT

This Church Kit includes everything you need to plan and lead a meaningful four-week Advent series and Christmas Eve Service.

Church Kit Digital Resources

The Digital Resources include all of the content you need to plan and promote your service.

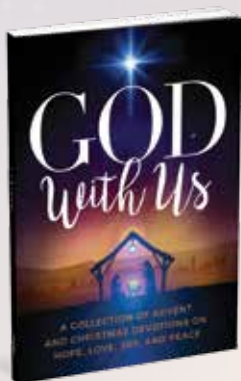
- **Promotional Video:** Show this video in the weeks leading up to your series to get your members excited and planning to attend.

- **Christmas Eve Video:** Use this versatile video however it best fits with your service - either as a welcome video at the start of the service, or as a service wrap-up before dismissal.
- **Bumper Videos:** Show these weekly videos in each service to help the congregation prepare to celebrate and worship together.
- **PowerPoint Template:** Customize these slides to use throughout your series while carrying the design and theme of *God With Us*.
- **Bulletin Insert Template:** This file enables you to create and print 5.5" by 8.5" inserts for your church bulletin. The bulletin insert is designed so that you can easily add text for announcements, sign-ups, or sermon notes.
- **Web and Social Media Graphics:** Banners and buttons you can use on your website and social media channels to help promote your series with attractive and consistent visuals.

Customizable Sermons

The Church Kit contains four complete sermons to be given during the Advent season, as well as a Christmas Eve sermon that ties your series together in a culminating celebration (and can also stand alone if you so choose). The messages are prepared for the pastor or church leader and provided

as a resource to use as-is or adapt and personalize. Each week presents one of the Advent themes: hope, love, joy, and peace.



God With Us: Devotions through the season of Advent on Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace

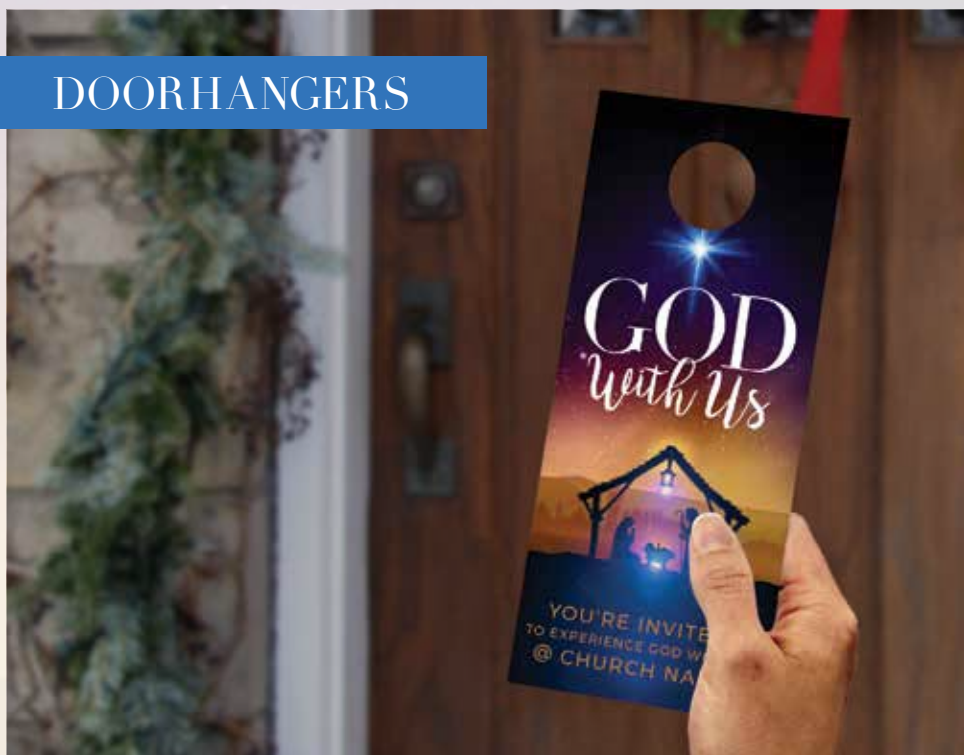
This book is designed as a gift to be given to church members and visitors alike.

You may want to order them to distribute early in the season, as well as have plenty on hand to give as gifts for visitors and every family attending your Christmas Eve service. This book contains devotions for each of the 30 days leading up to Christmas. Based around the weekly Advent themes of hope, love, joy, and peace, there are also sections for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day—which emphasize the importance and power of God with us; they also encourage us to remember that God is with our world through us. Includes Practical ideas help to spur us toward ways to share God’s love and presence with others.

Sample Invitational Tools

Get a firsthand look at some of the resources you can use to promote your services. See the Resource Flyer for more information on invitational tools like direct mail postcards, DoorHangers, posters, banners, and more.

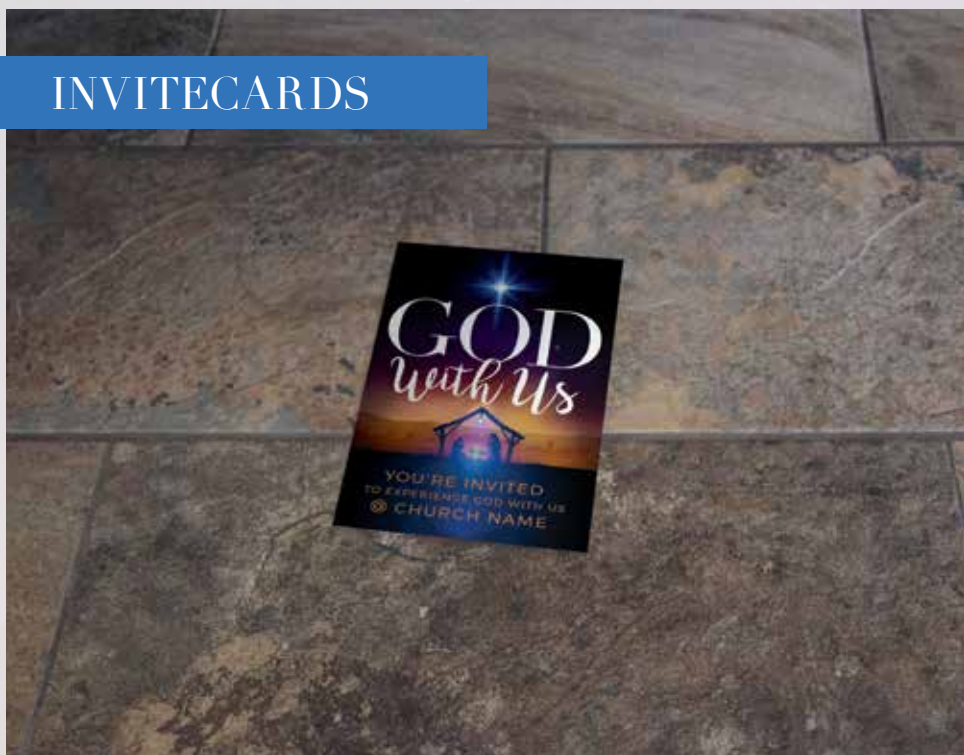
DOORHANGERS



POSTCARDS



INVITECARDS





STEPS
For Success

STEP 1: PLAN

- **Pray** for your series
- **Cast the vision** with your leaders
- **Get your church ready:** parking, greeters, signage, info desk, and children's ministry areas
- **Make an assimilation plan** to follow up with visitors
- **Get the resources you need:** banners, invites, bulletins, gift books, etc

STEP 2: PROMOTE

- **Start Early.** Begin promoting your series at least four weeks before it begins.
- **Send Invitations.** Use direct mail and hang an eye-catching *God With Us* banner outside your church to attract people passing by.

Show the Promotional Video and the Invite Video during Sunday services prior to your series to be sure everyone knows about and gets excited to be part of what your church is doing.

- **Equip Your Members to Be Inviters.** Help your members extend winning invitations by providing themed Door-Hangers or postcards to invite friends, neighbors, and co-workers to your services.

Ask your attendees to commit to attending the services and inviting at least one other person to come with them.

- **Maximize Social Networks.** Announce *God With Us* services, and any follow-up events on your Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, or other pages. See the Social Media Guide in the church kit for ideas.
- **Tweet and Text.** Send announcements through your church Twitter feed, or enlist volunteers to do this. Ask members to retweet. You can also send suggested text and web links for church members to use to invite friends to your services.
- **Post on Community Calendars.** Contact newspapers, TV and radio stations, local magazines, mail-out coupon flyers, recreation centers, or clubs—anyone who posts a calendar of events.

STEP 3: HOST

- Get Your Members Involved
- Host a Ministry Fair
- Prep Your Church for Visitors
- Create a Welcoming Atmosphere
- Connect Visitors to a Small Group or Sunday School Class
- Serve Refreshments

STEP 4: CONNECT

- Follow up with visitors
- Plan a post-Christmas series for which they'll want to return

OUTDOOR BANNERS



POSTERS



INDOOR BANNERS



BASIC BANNERS





OUTREACH[®]