

Fourth Sunday of Advent

The child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

—Luke 1:35 NRSV

Explore

Candle of Love

one votive candle
per youth, 8-by-
1-inch strip of
beeswax

Provide each youth with a votive candle and an 8-by-1-inch strip of honeycomb beeswax. (Sheets for making beeswax candles are available at craft stores. Several strips can be cut from one sheet.) Wrap the strip tightly around the votive. If necessary, tie a narrow ribbon around the candle to hold the strip in place. While preparing the candles with the beeswax strips, review the story of Jesus' birth in a lowly stable. Identify these candles as lights of love.

Extract

Young Mary

Bible

Read Luke 1:26–38. Discuss Mary's life at this time: her young age (fourteen or fifteen), her betrothal to Joseph, the possibility of divorce when he learned of her pregnancy, the cultural viewpoint of her circumstances. What was Mary's response when learning from the angel the great news that she was to give birth to the Son of God?

Luke 1:26–38
Matthew 22:38 IV

Mary accepted her calling though she could not possibly have understood the magnitude of what she was to be a part of at that time. But, nevertheless, she accepted the call of God willingly and obediently. How many of us can say that we are willing and obedient to answer the call of God's commandment to love one another? How many times have we become jealous or offended, bitter or unforgiving, angry or unrepentant? Probably more often than any of us would like to admit. It is not easy to humbly accept the fact we have put aside God's call to love for our own opinions and priorities, our own grudges and selfishness.

It says in Matthew 22:38 IV that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. The call to love one another means just that. In good times and bad we are to love and show love to one another. When other people do not show love to us, we are to love them anyway. How many times have we passed judgment on those we thought were offensive and unkind? When we answer God's call to love, we become a light to a hurting heart. It might be one of us God meticulously chooses to reach out to someone particular who is hurting. God sent Jesus to a hurting world. Despite the cruelty and pain inflicted upon God's only son, God still loves us.

Isn't it only fitting that after accepting God's unconditional love through Jesus' sacrifice, we should strive to be the embodiment of love to all we meet? How can we accept such a gracious gesture of God's affection toward us and not extend that same graciousness to others? Can we really be hypocritical enough to accept the love of Christ yet not be willing to respond to God's love to the hurting around us?

Experience

Share the Love

Make heart sun catchers to give away. Cut various lengths (six to eighteen inches) of 16-gauge copper or brass wire. Bend the wire into heart shapes, twist the ends together smoothly, and add a drop of all-purpose adhesive glue at the joint. Cut off extra wire with wire cutters. Rub one side of the wire heart with white glue, and press down on squares of colorful tissue paper. Press carefully, making sure that the glued wire comes in

contact with the tissue paper. Set aside to dry while making additional hearts. Each sun catcher will require three or more hearts of decreasing size. When glue dries, trim away any extra tissue paper. Apply a coat of clear nail polish to each side of the heart, letting it dry each time. (Use a hair dryer to speed up the drying time.) Repeat with a second coat of nail polish.

16-gauge copper or bronze wire, wire cutters, all-purpose glue, colored tissue paper, scissors, clear nail polish, hair dryer, needle, thread

When all the hearts are dry, join three of them by gently inserting a threaded needle at the top of one heart and the bottom of the next. Tie the ends of the thread together securely. The smallest heart will be at the bottom. Attach a thread for hanging at the top of the largest heart. Deliver the sun catchers to people who need the love of Jesus.

Give Birth to Love

What does it mean to give birth to love? Give examples of God's love in your life and how you can put love into the lives of others. Respond on the paper provided.

paper, pens or pencils

Expand

Go in God's Love

Let God conceive inside of you today what God conceived inside of Mary centuries ago—"love." Let us allow our hearts to give birth to God's love to the point that others recognize it and are drawn to God's presence inside of us. Let our words and actions witness to the world of the Savior's awesome sacrifice for us. Listen to God's love within and witness of it to others. Sing "Awesome God," *Sing a New Song* 4.

Sing a New Song