Advent Activity: The Jesse Tree

The Jesse Tree is an Advent tradition believed to stem back to medieval times. It is a way for Christians to look to the Hebrew Scriptures and see our God setting the stage for the birth of Jesus. Jesus had a family tree and ancestors like every other human. The Jesse Tree is named after Jesse, father of King David. A thousand years later, through his adoptive father Joseph, Jesus was a descendant of the house of Jesse.

The images on the Jesse Tree point to events that stand out in the history of God and his people. They show us the unveiling of God's promise of salvation, as God reaches out over the centuries to invite us to share ever more fully in friendship and life.

Jesse Trees can be used as a kind of Advent Calendar. During the days of Advent, images and scriptures from our salvation story are added to the Jesse Tree. ***Please note:*** *there are many different images and scriptures you can use. We have selected 16 to help schools journey to the end of term.*

For this activity you will need:

- A branch or large image of a branch.
- A container or table to stand the branch in/on.
- Copies of the salvation story images (pages 2-5)
- Coloured pencils/pens
- String
- Sticky tape

1. Secure your branch in a container, using sand or stones. Alternatively, rest the branch on a prayer table that has been covered with a purple cloth (the liturgical colour for Advent). If not using a real branch, attach a large image of a branch on a wall.
2. Print off the salvation story images and scriptures on the following pages. We recommend you print on thin card.
3. Cut the card along the dotted lines (we've created rectangular shapes so they're easier to cut) and provide one to each pupil. Explain the Jesse Tree to pupils, then invite them to decorate their salvation story images.

   As an additional activity, ask pupils to explain what they remember from RE lessons about their card's story.
4. Use sticky tape to attach a string loop (about 20cm long) to the top back of each image. These loops will be used to hang the images on the Jesse Tree.
5. Collect the images and store safely. Each day during Advent, invite a pupil to add an image to the Jesse Tree. The images must be added in chronological order (see below). To assist, we've inserted a number to the top right of each image. We recommend pupils read the scripture on the image before they hang them on the tree (the scriptures are adapted for children from NJB).

1. Creation **2.** Abraham's journey in faith **3.** Birth of Isaac **4.** Birth of Jacob & Esau **5.** Jacob's promise

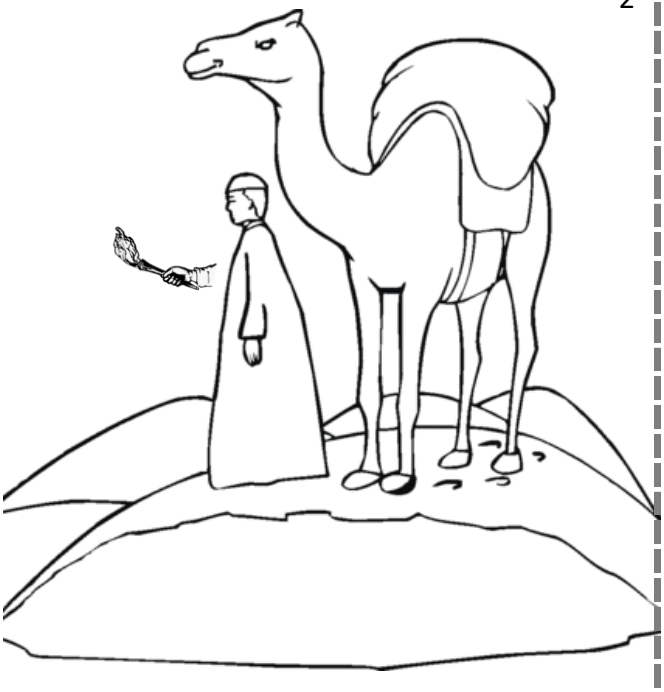
6. Joseph's coat **7.** Moses is chosen **8.** Samuel's call **9.** Stump of Jesse **10.** David is chosen

11. Isaiah **12.** Jeremiah **13.** John the Baptist **14.** Joseph **15.** Mary **16.** Birth of Jesus

1

A reading from the book of Genesis: 'God said, let us make humans in our own image, and let them look after the fish, the birds, the wild beasts, and all the creatures that crawl upon the earth.' Genesis 1:26

2



A reading from the book of Genesis: 'God said to Abram, leave your country and your father's house, for the land I will show you… So Abram went as God told him.' Genesis 12:1,4

3

A reading from the book of Genesis: 'God was kind to Abraham's wife, Sarah, and did what he had promised her. Sarah gave birth to a son, at the time that God had promised. Abraham named his son Isaac.' Genesis 21:1-4

4

A reading from the book of Genesis: Isaac prayed to God for his wife, Rebecca, for they wanted children. God heard but warned Rebecca that the boys born to her would be rivals and lead rival nations. In time twin boys were born. Isaac and Rebecca named the boys Esau and Jacob. Genesis 25:21-27

5

A reading from the book of Genesis: God appeared to Jacob and said, 'A nation shall descend from you. Kings will belong to your family. I will give the land I gave to Abraham and Isaac, to you and your people. Jacob raised a monument at the place God had spoken, on it he poured oil as an offering.' Genesis 35:11-15

6

A reading from the book of Genesis: Joseph forgave his brothers for selling him into slavery. He said to them, 'You intended to harm me, but God turned this for good and so saved many lives.' Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father's family. He lived a hundred and ten years and saw the birth of many descendants. Genesis 50:20,22,23

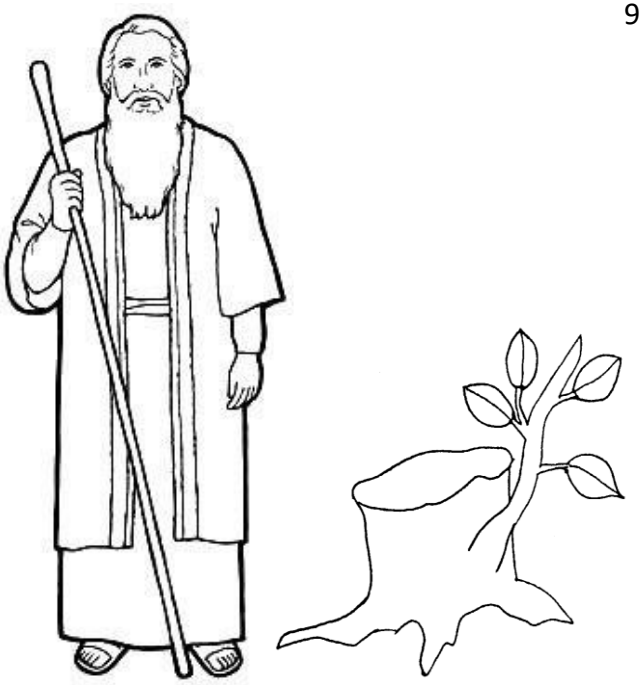
7

A reading from the book of Exodus: The Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe. She saw a basket among the reeds, opened it and found a baby. She felt sorry for him and arranged for the baby to be cared for. When the child grew older, he became the son of the Pharaoh's daughter. She named him Moses. Exodus 2:5-10

8

A reading from the book of Samuel: The boy Samuel was lying in the temple, when God called out 'Samuel! Samuel!' Samuel ran to Eli the priest thinking he had called. Eli soon understood that it was God who called Samuel and told Samuel how to reply. When God called again, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Samuel replied, saying 'Speak Lord, your servant is listening.' 1 Samuel 3:3-11

9

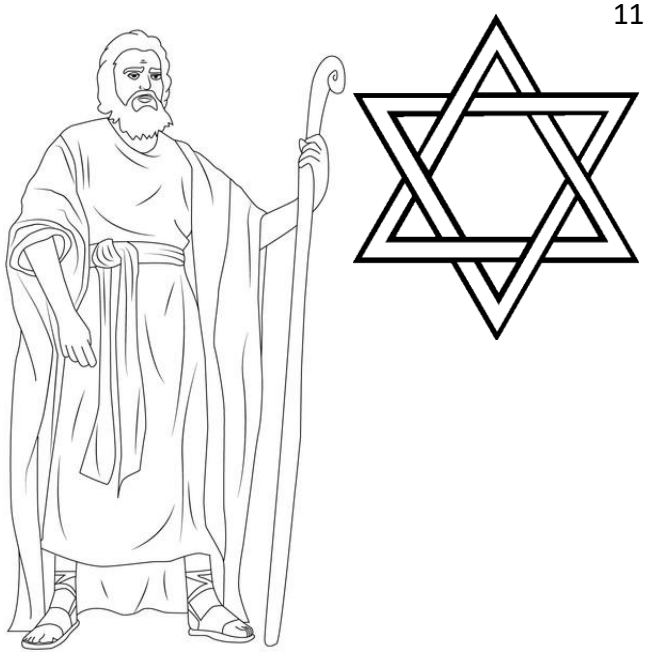


A reading from the book of Samuel: God said to Samuel, 'I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen myself a king from his sons.' Samuel did what God ordered and went to Bethlehem.
1 Samuel 16:1,4

10

A reading from the book of Samuel: Jesse presented seven sons to Samuel, but these were not chosen by God. Jesse then sent for his youngest son, David, who was looking after the sheep. God told Samuel to anoint David, and the spirit of God rushed on David and stayed with him from that day on. 1 Samuel 16:10-13

11



A reading from the prophet Isaiah: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given... He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and peace will have no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, with fairness and goodness forever. Isaiah 9: 6,7

12

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah: 'The Lord says this, 'Look, the days are coming when I will fulfil the promise I made long ago: that in those days, at that time, I will make a virtuous branch sprout for King David. He will run this country honestly and fairly. He will set things right.' Jeremiah 33:14-15

13

A reading from the Gospel of St Mark: The beginning of the good news about Jesus, the Son of God. Isaiah the prophet wrote; 'A voice calls in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him."' So John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of changed lives for the forgiveness of sins. Mark 1: 1-4

14

A reading from the Gospel of St Luke: At that time, Caesar Augustus declared that a census of the world must be taken. Everyone had to go to their own town to be registered. Joseph set out for the town of King David, called Bethlehem, because Joseph was descended from David's family. Luke 2:1-4

15

A reading from the Gospel of St Luke: God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin who lived in Nazareth. The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary, because God is pleased with you. Listen! You will become pregnant. You will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. The Lord God will give him the throne of King David, his ancestor. He will rule over the people forever and his kingdom will never end." Luke 1:26-33

16

A reading from the Gospel of St Luke: In the country-side, close by the manger, the angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by all people! Today in the town of David, a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.' Luke 2:8-12