

we

# EXPECTATIONS

1 Event for Advent



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we



Grand Rapids, Michigan

We'd like to hear from you! Please feel free to contact us at 1-800-333-8300 or [editorial@faithaliveresources.org](mailto:editorial@faithaliveresources.org) with your comments and questions about *WE*.

Faith Alive is grateful to Laura Keeley for writing *WE: Expectations*, and to Karen De Boer for writing the bonus event, *WE: People of Faith*.

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# CONTENTS

Welcome to WE.....5

Frequently Asked Questions.....6

Making WE Happen—Planning Tips.....7

Event 1: Expectations (Advent).....11

Bonus Event: People of Faith (Hebrews 11).....61



# WELCOME TO WE

You have in front of you a single event that is part of a series called WE. WE is an exciting new concept in faith nurture: intergenerational events that can bring your entire church family closer as you together learn about God and God's story.

With WE, your whole congregation gathers with all ages together. Why? Because to grow in faith we need each other! To truly be the body of Christ we need the enthusiasm of children, the energy of teens, and the wisdom and experience of young adults through senior citizens. We all have things to teach each other, and we can all help point each other to God.

## Why Intergenerational Learning?

In the past few years, many educators have begun to identify some drawbacks of the “silo” approach to faith nurture in which age groups are separated. That approach has allowed churches to tailor their teaching to the learning abilities of particular groups, but it has also had some unintended negative results, such as

- a lack of community within the church family.
- the loss of opportunities to learn and grow with those who are in different places on the faith journey.
- parents' expectation that the church will be the primary source of faith nurture for their children.

As a result, many churches are looking for ways to rebuild community and spend time learning and growing together.

In the book *Intergenerational Faith Formation*, the authors contend, “There has never been a stronger need for intergenerational faith formation. . . . When we bring the different age groups together, we see a revitalization of the faith of the elders and a deeper understanding of the faith traditions on the part of the young” (Twenty-Third Publications, 2008, p. 14). They also argue that all-ages faith nurture empowers parents to share their faith more openly at home.

## Why WE?

We're so excited that you've chosen this event from the WE series—not just because it's a great program that's lots of fun but because of what WE can do for your faith community:

- WE's event-based format makes it fun for people of all ages to grow together as they learn from each other and grow in faith as they hear God's story.
- WE complements EVERY church education, faith nurture, and children's ministry program. Whatever you're using now, you can use WE alongside it.
- WE is easy to set up and easy to use. And we've kept advance preparation to a minimum—a feature your volunteers will appreciate.
- It's cost-efficient—all you need is this book, inexpensive supplies, some great food, some volunteers, and you're ready to go!

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **How long does a WE event last?**

Each WE event is designed to last about two hours, including a meal. If you serve only snacks or dessert, plan on an hour and a half or less.

## **Why include a meal?**

A prepared meal is often a big draw for busy families. Sharing a meal also makes it easier for people to meet others and to feel more comfortable when it's time to interact and learn together. It can also be a great time to try foods from the different ethnic groups in your church or community.

## **How many people should be seated at a table?**

Plan for six to eight people per table. This ensures that everyone has a chance to talk and be easily heard. The session instructions also give you fun tips for making seat assignments to help people mingle and meet each other.

## **Will all ages really feel welcome?**

Yes! Your WE group will be talking about open-ended questions that don't require extensive Bible knowledge or have a "right" answer. The activities we've included are fun for all ages. No matter how old you are or where you are on your faith journey, a WE event is fun, informal, and faith-building.

## **Why is it important to give people something to take home?**

When the event is over, the learning should continue! After each event, every household will receive a devotional guide to use before the next event (or for the weeks after the first and only event, as in this case). We've also provided suggestions for other take-home items to hand out at the end of an event. These are optional, but they're fun and meaningful!

## **How do WE events help people of all ages live out their faith?**

During each WE event participants will be challenged to consider how they can or will live out what they've learned. In addition to occasional service opportunities built right into some events, we've also included an activity called "Take It Further" in which you'll find great ideas to help participants take what they've learned even further together.

## **Can we use WE for midweek family ministry or in a home church?**

Absolutely! Although WE events are especially designed to involve your entire congregation, they will also work wonderfully in a family ministry, in a home church, in Christian school communities with parents and grandparents, and more! Anywhere an intergenerational group gathers, WE can work.

# MAKING WE HAPPEN—PLANNING TIPS

## WE: Expectations

The theme of this WE event is Advent. In one event your church family will explore what it means to wait with expectation for Jesus, the Son of God and son of David, who will bring in God's eternal kingdom. People of all ages will work together to create a Jesse tree display that shows God's plan of salvation unfolding. If you choose to use the free bonus event, *People of Faith*, your church family will explore Hebrews 11 to discover what it means to be part of God's big family of faith.

## Gather Your Team

To make a WE event happen without doing all the work yourself, you'll want to identify the following people to help. Some of these duties can be combined if your volunteer pool is small.

**EVENT COORDINATOR/GREETER** does the planning, promotes the event to the congregation and community, recruits volunteers, and gathers supplies. This individual also serves as the greeter by welcoming people, handing out nametags at the door, and passing out the take-home items before people leave.

**EVENT HOST** introduces the event, keeps it moving, and closes the event in prayer. Choose someone who's outgoing, time-conscious, and comfortable in front of a crowd.

**SONG LEADER** provides musical accompaniment and teaches new songs. Consider asking a college student or musical teen to help in this way.

**FOOD/CLEANUP COORDINATOR** organizes the food for each event, whether it's a served meal, a potluck, or a snack, and takes charge of cleaning up after the meal.

**A/V TECHNICIAN** sets up, tests, and runs the sound system and projection equipment if you're using them for this event.

At your initial meeting with your team, spend some time helping everyone catch the WE vision. For help, see the document titled "Getting Started with WE" on the event CD and the "Welcome to WE" and "FAQ" sections of this guide (pp. 5 and 6, respectively).

Set up a meeting two weeks before the date of the event to go through the event outline together. Make sure each person on your team is clear about his or her role. You may want to meet once more before the event to touch base and tie up loose ends.



## Promote Your WE Event

On the WE event CD you'll find promotional items your church can use to spread the word about WE. We suggest you consider promoting the WE event in some of the following ways:

- Church bulletin announcement
- PowerPoint announcement before or after worship service
- Invitation emailed to members
- Postcard invitations sent to homes
- Posters displayed in common areas
- Fliers in member mailboxes

## RSVPs

It's important to plan a way to gather RSVPs, whether it's on a signup sheet or by email. You'll need to know in advance how many people will be attending the WE event so you know how much food and activity materials to have on hand. But be sure to set extra places for last-minute attendees!

## Room Setup

For this WE event you'll need the following:

- a welcome table by the door on which to place the nametags
- tables and chairs set up in groups of six to eight
- tables and tableware for food service
- sound amplification equipment, unless your group is very small
- projection equipment for song lyrics and PowerPoint (optional)

Any additional setup requirements will be noted in the event's instructions.

## Event Supplies

At the beginning of each step in the event, we list the supplies needed and offer setup tips. Most of the supplies are basic, inexpensive things you'll easily be able to find in your church or borrow.

## Including People of All Abilities

Any time an intergenerational group gets together, there will be people with varying abilities. Consider the needs in your particular congregation and make adjustments as appropriate.

Here are some tips that may help:

- To assist those with hearing impairments or difficulties, if possible hold all meetings in a room with a sound system (or better yet, a hearing loop) and insist that anyone addressing the whole group use a microphone.
- If there are people in the group who have vision impairments, ask for volunteers to sit next to them, guide them as requested if movement is necessary, and describe any visual elements of the event.
- On your signup sheet, leave space for people to list dietary concerns or severe allergies.
- When choosing among activity options, consider the needs of anyone who has issues with mobility.

- If there are people in your group who don't like loud noises or a busy environment, consider designating one table a "quiet table" so they won't be as disturbed by loud talking or other noises that might bother them.
- Ask for volunteers to serve as assistants for people with intellectual disabilities. Ask the assistants to help explain instructions, guide the person through activities, or help in other ways.
- Make sure all children in your group feel included. When writing is called for, assist anyone who needs help. Make sure there's room for children to participate in all discussions and activities.
- Have translators available if there are people in your church who are learning English as a second language.

## A Word about Sound Systems

If a sound system is available at your church, you'll find it to be very helpful for WE events. This is especially helpful for people who have hearing impairments, and it will ensure that everyone who speaks to the large group can be heard. If your meeting space is small or your church doesn't have sound equipment, make sure to ask everyone who addresses the large group to speak loudly and distinctly.

## Music

Singing together is a great community builder. If there's a piano in your meeting space, that's perfect for accompaniment. If not, ask a guitarist to lead your singing. Song suggestions for WE events are drawn from a variety of songbooks and other sources. Many of these songs can be found in the following hymnals and songbooks available from Faith Alive at [www.FaithAliveResources.org](http://www.FaithAliveResources.org) or 1-800-333-8300:

- *Contemporary Songs for Worship*
- *Psalter Hymnal*
- *Sing! A New Creation*
- *Sing With Me* (children's songbook)

WE events are also great times to have someone from another culture teach songs with new musical patterns or songs in a different language.

## Take It Further

In the reproducible pages for each WE event, you'll find cards that contain ideas for continuing the learning in small groups, youth groups, and homes.



## EVENT OUTLINE

# EXPECTATIONS

## Scripture

Isaiah 11:1-9 and 2 Samuel 6:12-7:23

## Event Focus

In this event we'll create a Jesse tree to explore what it means to wait with expectation for Jesus, the Son of God and son of David, who will bring in God's eternal kingdom.

This WE event, like all the others, has three steps:

### Step 1: Welcome, Gathering, and Building Community

Gather as a group to enjoy some good food as you talk about waiting and preparing for the celebration of Jesus' birth.

### Step 2: Learning Experiences for All Ages

Enter the story by hearing a drama about the people of God awaiting a savior. Then live into the story by looking at other Bible stories that point to the Messiah in signs, symbols, and promises and creating Jesse tree symbols together.

### Step 3: Reflect and Praise

Share what you have learned, praise God in song, and learn how to "take it further" with ideas for making a Jesse tree at home.

These activities are designed to help WE participants:

- explore stories from the Old Testament to see how God's plan of salvation unfolded.
- sense the anticipation building for our long-awaited Savior.
- celebrate Jesus as the promised Messiah and the coming King.

## What Is a Jesse Tree?

Jesse refers to King David's father. Isaiah 11:1 says that a shoot will come from the stump of Jesse and a branch will grow from his roots. That promise has inspired art throughout Christian history that depicts the ancestors of Jesus and points to God's faithfulness through the generations. Creating a Jesse tree is a visual way to represent many stories from the Old and New Testaments that point to Jesus as the long-awaited Savior who will come again in power and glory.

## FOOD/CLEANUP COORDINATOR

### Food Ideas

- Soup supper: Purchase or prepare soup and ask families to bring fruit or bread to complete the meal.
- For dessert: Set up a table with sugar cookies and items to decorate the cookies, such as icing, chocolate chips, small candies, etc. Use some of the same shapes as the Jesse tree symbols for the cookies (shepherd's crook, star, candle, etc.) Encourage everyone to decorate his or her own cookie.

## SONG LEADER

### Suggested Music

- "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"
- "He Came Down"
- "O Come, O Come, Immanuel"
- "Matthew's Begats" by Andrew Peterson
- "Everlasting God" by Lincoln Brewster

## SUPPLIES AND PREP

## STEP 1: Welcome, Gathering, and Building Community

**EVENT COORDINATOR** **Welcome** your WE group as they arrive. To encourage them to meet others in your church family, use a fun way to mix things up! Direct people to their tables using coded nametags (see Supplies and Prep box). Hand out the nametags in random order, but be sure to accommodate any young children who want to sit with a parent.

**HOST** **Begin** the event with a warm welcome, using words like these:

Welcome, everyone, to this WE event! We're very glad you're here!

This event focuses on Advent. Advent is a time of waiting. We're waiting to celebrate the birth of Jesus. During this time we're looking forward to the promises of the Old Testament coming true—promises of peace, salvation, and joy. We remember the promises God made to his people and celebrate how he fulfilled those promises on Christmas day.

Advent starts four Sundays before Christmas. Because Christmas falls on different days each year, Advent can be as short as 22 days or as long as 28 days. Purple is the color for Advent. That's because we are waiting for a king to be born! Purple is the color of royalty.

With the people at your table you'll be hearing God's Word, eating delicious food, and thinking about Israel waiting for their promised Redeemer, Jesus. Israel is not alone in their waiting. We're waiting too, this time for the return of Jesus and the promise of God's forever kingdom!

Then open with prayer and a reading or song, using:

- The responsive reading of Jeremiah 31:31-34 or of Psalm 8 (see Supplies and Prep box). If projection is not available, ask the four readers to read the part of the people in unison.
- The song "Matthew's Begats" by Andrew Peterson.

### EVENT COORDINATOR

#### SUPPLIES AND PREP FOR STEP 1

- **Table decorations and nametags.** It's important that your WE group gets to know each other. Randomly assigning people to tables, while it makes some folks uncomfortable, is a good way to help that happen. Choose one of these options for decorating the table and for nametags:
  - o Decorate each table with a different Jesse tree symbol, such as a star, a shepherd's crook, a tent, wheat, a ladder, a heart, a slingshot, scenes from ancient Bethlehem, etc. Use the symbols found in the Reproducible.jpg files on the event CD to print a symbol for each table, and create matching nametags for that table. Be sure to match the number of nametags with the number of chairs around the table. For example, if you have eight chairs at the "star" table, make eight "star" nametags.
  - o Decorate each table with a different color candle. Draw a star on each nametag (or use star stickers) that matches the color of the candle at the table. Be sure to match the number of nametags with the number of chairs around the table.
- **Make a Jesse tree** using one of the ideas suggested on p. 27 in this book and in the Reproducibles.pdf file on the event CD. As you decide on the size of your tree,

**A/V TECHNICIAN** Project the responsive reading or song lyrics.

**HOST** Invite participants to enjoy the good food together and use the dinner-table time as follows:

1. **Introduce** themselves to one another and share the name of their favorite Advent or Christmas song.
2. As a group, **assign** one person to serve as table leader for the night.
3. Use the questions on the conversation tents to kick off their discussion during the meal and to help them prepare for the learning later.

**FOOD/CLEANUP COORDINATOR** When people are finished eating (allow about 30 minutes for a meal or 15 minutes for a snack), clear the tables to prepare for table activities.

consider the number and style of symbols your groups will be making in Step 2. Set the Jesse tree up in your meeting space where everyone can see it.

- **Conversation Tents.** When you know how many tables you'll have, print the same number of conversation tents (p. 18 in this book or in the Reproducibles.pdf file on the event CD) onto cardstock. Fold in half where indicated. Place one tent on each table before your *WE* group arrives.
- Choose one of the following ways to open the event:
  - o Ask a musician or group of musicians to sing the song "Matthew's Begats" by Andrew Peterson from the CD *Behold the Lamb of God* (Andrew Peterson, Fervent Records, 2004) for your devotions. To purchase a downloadable songbook of *Behold the Lamb of God* that includes the music and lyrics for "Matthew's Begats," visit [store.rabbitroom.com](http://store.rabbitroom.com).
  - o **OR** choose one of the two responsive readings (p. 19 or 20 in this book or in the Reproducibles.pdf file on the event CD). Ask four people to read, including at least one child and one teen or young adult, and give each reader a copy of the reading. PowerPoints of both readings are available on the event CD.

# WE Expectations

You have in your hands an exciting new concept in faith nurture! *we* is a series of fun, easy-to-use intergenerational events that get your whole church together for a rich learning celebration that brings unity to your community.

Through drama, readings, and a whole-church Jesse tree project, *WE: Expectations* will help your church prepare for the coming of Jesus, the Son of God and the “son of David.” While other *we* series contain several events, this single stand-alone event fits easily into your Advent/Christmas schedule.

In addition, this program guide includes a bonus event: *WE: People of Faith*, based on Hebrew 11. Use it before or after Advent to explore and celebrate what it means to be part of a large family of faith.

## This event guide includes:

- Planning and setup tips
- A clear and complete event outline
- Lists of easy-to-find supplies
- Reproducible pages to print or copy



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