

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
HANGING OF THE GREENS

Emmanuel

GOD IS WITH US

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, FULSHEAR

Celebrating at Home the HANGING OF THE GREENS

In this time of pandemics and social distancing, if you're not able to join us in the Sanctuary for this special Advent celebration, you may want to hold your own Hanging of the Greens in your home. This could be a wonderful addition to your decorating for Christmas as you hang your wreaths and garlands, set up and decorate your Christmas Tree, and display your Nativity. This guide to a Hanging of the Greens worship in your home is simply one way to conduct this celebration. Feel free to customize it in ways that fit your family circumstances. With this guide, you may be on your way to adding a new family tradition to your Advent and Christmas celebrations!

Call to Worship

Choose a leader (L) and your family (P) says together:

(L) How shall we prepare this house for the coming of the King?

(P) With branches of cedar, the tree of royalty.

(L) How shall we prepare this house for the coming of the eternal Christ?

(P) With garlands of pine and fir, whose leaves are ever living, ever green.

(L) How shall we prepare this house for the coming of our Savior?

(P) With wreaths of holly and ivy, telling of his passion, death, and resurrection.

(L) How shall we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Son of God?

(P) By hearing again the words of the prophets, who foretold the saving work of God.

(L) For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

(P) Glory to God in the highest!

Song

Sing or play a recording of one of the following hymns (or one of your favorite Christmas songs from church):

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

The Evergreens

A family member says the following as you hang or lay out evergreens in your home. If your wreaths and garland are already hanging, then gather your family before a wreath or other evergreen for this reading.

Throughout the world, a common feature of Christmas is the use of evergreens in our homes and churches. Ancient peoples saw evergreens as emblems of peace, joy, and victory. The early Christians put evergreens in their windows to indicate the presence of Christ in their home. Holly and ivy, along with cedar, fir and pine, are called evergreens because they never change color. They are ever—green, ever—alive, even in the midst of winter. They symbolize the unchanging nature of God and they remind us of the everlasting life that is ours through Jesus Christ.

In Isaiah 60:13 we read: *The glory of Lebanon will be yours—the forests of cypress, fir, and pine—to beautify my sanctuary. My Temple will be glorious!* During this time of year, as our forefathers went about gathering evergreens for adorning their sanctuaries and homes, they called it “bringing home Christmas.” Let us bring that same spirit into our home today as we are reminded of Christ’s love and grace by the evergreens around us.

Song

Sing or play a recording of the following hymn (or one of your favorite Christmas songs from church):

The Holly and the Ivy

The Christmas Tree

A family member says the following as you set up the Christmas tree in your home. If your tree is already set up and decorated, gather your family at the tree for this reading.

During the Advent and Christmas seasons, the Christmas tree is at the center of our festivities. Glittering with lights and ornaments, it is a part of the beauty and meaning of Christmas. There are several legends and stories about the Christmas tree.

One story that is often told is that on a Christmas Eve long ago, Martin Luther wandered outdoors and was captivated by the beauty of the wintry, starry sky. Its brilliance and loveliness led him to reflect on the glory of the first Christmas Eve as seen in Bethlehem's radiant skies. He wanted to share with his wife and children the wonder he felt from that image so he went into the forest, cut an evergreen that was glistening with snow, and took it home. He placed upon it candles to represent the glorious heavens he saw just outside his door. It became a tradition that spread across Germany, Europe, and America—and here in our home today.

Song

Sing or play a recording of the following hymn (or one of your favorite Christmas songs from church):

O Tannenbaum (O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree)

The Christmas Tree Ornaments

A family member says the following as you decorate your Christmas tree. If your tree is already decorated, gather your family at the tree for this reading.

The Christmas Trees in our homes are decorated with ornaments that are special to our family. Some of them bring back special memories of family trips, children growing up, and family traditions. Some of them are special because they remind us of the birth of Jesus and the love and salvation He came to give. Together, the ornaments on our tree tell stories about our family and our love for Jesus. May they shine like a beacon of Christ's love to all who enter our home during this special season.

Song

Sing or play a recording of the following hymn (or one of your favorite Christmas songs from church):

Do You Hear What I Hear?

The Nativity

A family member says the following as you set out the figures in your Nativity. If your Nativity is already set out, gather your family around it for this reading.

One of the most heart-warming expressions of Christmas is the Nativity. It speaks of the mystery of God's wisdom—we cannot truly fathom why God the Son chose to come into our world when He did and as a baby, born to a poor, humble family in common surroundings. What we do know is that God reached out to all people including the poor and the wealthy. All who found Him knelt in humility before Him. He made it possible for us to know God because God came to us, at our level. Whenever we look upon our Nativity, we find ourselves with Mary and Joseph, with the shepherds, and with the wise men, bowing before the manger, overwhelmed by God's expression of love coming to us and within us.

Song

Sing or play a recording of the following hymn (or one of your favorite Christmas songs from church):

What Child Is This

Closing Prayer

Pray this prayer together as a family:

Loving God, we joyfully await the coming of our Savior, who enlightens our hearts, and dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin. Pour your blessings upon us as we prepare our home for the celebration of your first coming and the anticipation of your return. May our home reflect the splendor of Christ, who is our Lord, for ever and ever. Amen.