

# Keeping the Twelve Days of Christmas at Home

## Ideas for Families with Young Children

Christmas isn't just one day, but a whole season! It lasts twelve days, from Christmas Day to Epiphany (January 6). Keep celebrating! Gather with friends and family, eat cookies, enjoy your Christmas decorations, watch Christmas movies, and sing all your favorite Christmas songs. Song suggestions for each day follow, but sing whichever ones your family likes best.

### **December 26**

Sing "Joy to the world" (ELW 267). Bundle up and go outside to sing. Join your voices with the fields, rocks, hills, and all the earth! Jesus is born, and this is good news for creation. Notice the ways that the world outside is "singing" its praise: listen for birds singing, the sound of the wind through tree branches, and other nature sounds.

### **December 27**

Sing "Go tell it on the mountain" (ELW 290). Today the church remembers St. John, Apostle and Evangelist. John's gospel describes Christ as the Word-made-flesh who came to live among us. In Jesus, God comes to us in person to bring us love and light. With John and all messengers of good tidings, we shout from the mountaintop the joyful news that Jesus is born!

### **December 28**

Sing "O little town of Bethlehem" (ELW 279). Build a fort out of chairs, couches, pillows, and blankets. Make sure there is plenty of room in the inn—fill your fort with stuffed animals, family members, and pets. Light a flashlight, lantern, or battery-powered candle inside your fort and think about Jesus being born among the animals in that little town called Bethlehem.

### **December 29**

Sing "O come, all ye faithful" (ELW 283). Jesus is born, and it is a happy morning! Cook breakfast together with your family—something delicious like pancakes or waffles. While you are cooking and eating, talk about your favorite parts of the Christmas season so far.

### **December 30**

Sing "Love has come" (ELW 292). Celebrate love today. Call, text, FaceTime, or Skype family and friends who live far away and tell them you love them. At bedtime, bless one another by tracing the sign of the cross on each other's foreheads and saying, "Jesus loves you and so do I!"

### **December 31**

Sing "It came upon the midnight clear" (ELW 282). At Christmas midnight, the angels welcomed Jesus. At midnight tonight, we welcome a new year. Say a special prayer together tonight. Thank God for the blessings of this past year. Ask God for hope and protection in the new year. Pray for peace and healing for all people, nations, and creation.

### **January 1**

Sing "What child is this" (ELW 296). The church observes this day as "Name of Jesus," because according to Jewish tradition, baby boys received their names on the eighth day of life. Do you

know what your name means? Were you named after someone? Do you have a nickname? Remember today that in baptism, you were also given the name “Child of God.”

### **January 2**

Sing “Away in a manger” (ELW 277/278). While baby Jesus slept in the manger, his parents, the animals, and even the stars watched him and protected him. Tonight, hang stars above your bed and put some stuffed animals near you to watch you sleep. Remember that Jesus loves you and promises to guard you, sleeping or waking.

### **January 3**

Sing “Silent night, holy night!” (ELW 281). Tonight, gather and light as many candles as you can find in your home. Turn off the lights. Notice how the candlelight bounces and flickers around the room. Have a leader say, “Jesus Christ is the light of the world.” Everybody else responds, “The light no darkness can overcome.” Take turns being the leader.

### **January 4**

Sing “Angels, from the realms of glory” (ELW 275). Have the magi from your nativity set been waiting to come to the manger? Move them somewhere a little closer to the nativity scene, then go outside and look for the brightest star you can see in the sky.

### **January 5**

Sing “Your little ones, dear Lord” (ELW 286). Collect all the stars you can find in your home—the stars you hung over your bed, star ornaments from the Christmas tree—and place them around your nativity scene. Hang the biggest one over the manger. Now your magi figures will know where Jesus is!

### **January 6**

Sing “The first Noel” (ELW 300). Have a home blessing. Notice what you are thankful for in each room of your home, and ask for God’s blessing (“God, bless our kitchen and the conversations we have there”). Continue the celebration with other Epiphany traditions, like burning pine branches or eating king cake.

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