

Once again Jesus spoke to the people. This time he said, "I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won't be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life."

— John 8:12

Christmas Tree Blessing Milestone Moment

Milestones Ministry brings an awareness of the presence of God to individuals of all generations by recognizing the home as church, too. Milestones Ministry provides a clear and usable model for congregations, homes, and community to connect faith formation resources with daily life experiences. The rich variety of life experiences represented in Milestones Ministry does the essential ministry of the church: promoting Christian faith formation with family, friends, and others with whom we can reach.

The season of Advent signals the beginning of the church year and gives a wonderful opportunity for the congregation to help families establish rituals and traditions to be handed from one generation to the next. An Advent wreath provides a visual reminder in the home of Jesus birth and His coming again. It is a good time to introduce faith practices in the home through reading scripture, prayer, and lighting a candle each week. The Christmas tree is another visual reminder. The custom of the Christmas tree was introduced in Germany in the 16th century. Legend tells that the evergreen was chosen and decorated with candles to represent God's creation and the gift of God's Son as the Light of the World. This tradition is continued today as we use evergreen trees, strings of lights, and ornaments to decorate the tree in our homes

Milestones incorporate a simple structure that includes naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing so that the Milestones Ministry Moment has a greater chance to take deeper root in lifelong faith formation.

Moments that cause us to pause and shift gears like the beginning of the church year and preparing for Christmas happen once a year and sometimes come all too quickly. Providing opportunities to take a breath and find God's presence in these moments is important. This Christmas Tree Blessing Milestone Moment incorporates a simple structure that includes:






Naming – Taking time to put up the Christmas tree and decorate it together with family is important. Naming the time as essential to building family rituals and traditions around the tree is significant.

Equipping – This Milestone Moment encourages caring conversations and provides prayers that point to Jesus as the Light of the World while we prepare for Christmas.

Blessing – Blessing the tree is a reminder of the role the home has in providing a place for faith lives to grow.

Gifting – Giving a tangible gift like a new ornament for the tree or a picture of family in front of the tree each year is a good way to establish a memory each year.

Reinforcing – It is a good idea to follow up after the Christmas Tree Blessing Moment by gathering again with family around the tree on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to share the journey you had together through the month and talk about ways to continue the practice of caring conversations and prayers throughout the coming year.

 Caring Conversations
  Devotions
  Four Key Faith Practices
  Service
  Rituals and Traditions





Christmas Tree Blessing Milestone Moment

For a Small Group or Family Gathering



Growing People in Faith when at Home and Away

“and talk about them when you are at home and when away, when you lie down and when you rise.”

– Deuteronomy 6:7b

A follow up for the Christmas Tree Blessing Milestone Moment can be done with caring conversations about what traditions you have experienced as a family to prepare for Christmas this year and what new ones you may want to add in the future. Gather together with family and friends for a follow up time to celebrate and reflect upon places and times the Light of the World was seen and felt this Christmas.

An important step after experiencing the Four Keys for practicing faith in the small groups or home setting is to bless and equip friends and families to continue practicing faith by using the Four Keys daily as an intentional step to encourage faith traditions in the home.

A suggested resource for continued caring conversations:

*[Taking Faith Home](#)
[Taking Faith Home Cards](#)*

*Additional Milestone Modules and Moments can be found at:
www.milestonesministry.org*



At the heart of equipping people for their lifelong faith formation are the Four Keys. These faith practices are central to every milestone and integrated into people’s daily lives as well as the life of the local congregation. These four daily faith practices are simple, doable, and practical: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions. The next page is a discussion guide handout to assist with the conversations.



As you gather around the tree, begin by sharing a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your lives and then use the outline below to talk about faith and God’s presence in this moment.



Caring Conversations

Process these thoughts and questions:

- Choose an ornament on the tree. Why did you choose this ornament? Is there a story about where it came from?
- For Parents and Grandparents: What is a memory you have about putting up the Christmas tree when you were a child?
- Children: What do you look forward to the most as you are decorating the Christmas tree?



Devotions

Read the following: *The Lord said: The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.* Jeremiah 33:14-15 (NRSV)

- What does it mean when someone makes a promise?
- How does this reading relate to Christmas?

Suggested Verse to Sing to the tune of Away in the Manger:

*As we gather together a-round the tree
Please help us remember a time long ago
When Jesus, our Savior, the Light of the World
Was sent as a gift so your love we would know*



Service

Make Christmas decorations, ornaments, or cookies to give to neighbors and friends. Deliver them as a family and sing Christmas carols before presenting gifts.

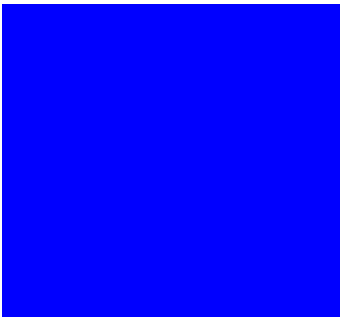


Rituals and Traditions

Gather around the Christmas Tree and read this blessing together: *This tree is a blessing to our home. It reminds us of all that is beautiful and of God’s promise. It stands in our home as a tree of light, a sign of Jesus’ presence with us as the Light of the World.*

Read the verses from Jeremiah again. *God of all Creation, we thank you for this tree. Bless us as we gather around it. May it light up our hearts with your love, joy and peace, and may the gifts placed under it remind us of the great gift of your Son Jesus. Amen.*

Light the tree and say together: *Jesus is the Light of the World.*



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Christmas Tree Blessing Discussion Guide



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