

# CHRISTMAS TREE PRACTICES

## Tell the Story of the Christmas Tree

When you put out your Christmas tree, take a moment to talk about the meaning and symbolism of the Christmas tree. People have been using green things from nature to decorate their homes for thousands of years. The ancient Egyptian people used palm branches, and ancient Roman people used evergreen branches. The green color reminded them of new life and new growth. The tradition of decorating an evergreen tree at Christmastime is another way we use nature to decorate. German immigrants in Pennsylvania in the 1800s were the first people in the U.S. to use a tree at Christmastime as a symbol of the season.

Today, most Christians have a real or artificial tree in their houses at Christmastime. The tree is a great place to hang ornaments and pretty decorations, but it's also a symbol of something that stays green all year. It is evergreen. In places where it freezes and ices and snows, the evergreen keeps its needles and green color all year long. When other branches are bare and empty, an evergreen's branches are lush and full.

The story is told that Martin Luther, a famous church reformer, was the first to tie candles to a green tree because it looked to him like stars twinkling through the green trees in the winter. When you see your green tree with lights, maybe it will remind you of some of the beautiful things in nature and the beauty that God created. Maybe you will be reminded that God's light shines always, even in winter, even in darkness. When you see twinkling stars, maybe you will want to say, "Thank you, God, for the beauty you have made."

**To talk about together:** What does your Christmas tree mean to you? Does it make you think of a real tree in nature? How does it make you feel? How is it part of your family's Christmas tradition? How does it help you not to fear?

## Christmas Tree Blessing

God who created all things, bless this tree as we decorate it and make it a joyful symbol for our home. May its branches remind us of the shelter and shade you provide for us and for many creatures. May its trunk remind us of your strength. May its lights remind us of your presence and bring us peace. May we remember your gift to us this season, the gift of baby Jesus. Amen.

## Placing the Angel

As we put the angel on top of the tree, we remember the angels in the Bible who say, "Do not be afraid!" May we be reminded of the modern-day angels who tell us the same thing and who watch over us all night and day.

**To talk about together:** Who are those modern-day angels?

*From Faithful Families for Advent & Christmas by Traci Smith*

