

## ANGEL BREAKFAST

**This is a fun event for preschoolers. It is designed to help them celebrate the real reason for the Church Year Seasons of Advent and Christmas.**

*The Office of Family and Children's Ministry, DHM, is grateful to Cindy Reeder, Christian Education Director, First Christian Church in Hagerstown, Maryland, for this Advent idea.*

In 1998 our minister announced that this year's Advent focus would be around the theme "Rumors of Angels." My Children's Ministry magazine had just arrived and on the front it announced that there was an article inside entitled "Christmas – Angel Breakfast." The article by Sandra Thompson caught my eye so I continued to review it. Ms. Thompson stated: "While I truly believe that deciding how much a family adopts the Santa fantasy is a family affair, I feel that the church should have the unique opportunity of focusing children's attention on the real reason for Christmas. "



I quickly concluded that she was right and began to plan our first Angel Breakfast. The first year we had 18 children and 18 adult guests. Since that time our breakfast, with the loving care of a committed volunteer chair, has grown to 100 children and 100 guests. It is the delight of every child and parent in the church and has the full support of the entire congregation.

If you're looking for a way to celebrate the real reason for the season with your preschoolers, and you'd like to plan your own Angel Breakfast, I'll be happy to send you the original article. I encourage you to make the Angel Breakfast your own (we sure did); there are a few things we will not alter.

Here's what we do:

- Our breakfast is always the first Saturday in December from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
- Children must be 2 years old by December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Children attending must be ages 2, 3, 4, 5 or currently attending Kindergarten. Other siblings are not invited to this event or we would have to change the focus and activities that are geared entirely to preschoolers.
- ONLY one adult can accompany a child in order to keep the focus on the child and not the parents. Parents serve as their child's helper for the morning.
- Invitations are sent through the mail to the CHILD and a RSVP is expected in order for name tags to be made for each attending child.
- Adults in the church are encouraged to invite grandchildren, neighborhood children, or others in that age range but an invitation is always sent to the child.
- Children always bring a gift for a specific charity that we designate. In the past, children have brought canned goods for the Food Bank or a book (not religious) to be given to a local school for their incentive programs. This helps children understand the joy of giving first, before receiving.

## **Getting Stated – That Week:**

Our Fellowship Hall is reserved and the decorating begins:

- Tables are set with burgundy table cloths and accented with blue and white
- White angel centerpieces, sitting on fluffy white clouds, are scattered throughout the hall on every table
- Placemats that read “*Kids need a stable beginning*” are at every place setting. A simple manger scene to color is the focal point of the placemat.
- Crayons are at every place setting so little hands can keep busy after eating breakfast.
- Disposable plastic ware is used and a single packet of fresh wipes are at each place setting.



Other areas are decorated that week as well:

- Hallway ceilings don white icicle lights.
- Pop-up angels line the sides of the hallway floors so little children can see them as they enter.
- The hallway to our Fellowship Hall becomes “Angel Avenue”. Here children pick up their name tag and prepare to follow angel foot prints into the photo area.
- The entrance to the hall is encased with blue shiny material and flying transparent angels that appear to be floating in the sky.
- Our “royal” red velvet chairs are positioned for photographs. That morning real angel adults will stand beside the children for pictures.
- A pair of wings that read “2010” will be ready to hand each child when it’s time for the photo.
- The stage curtain will hide a stable scene which will be revealed as the story of Jesus’ birth is told.

Food is prepared and ordered. Here’s what we serve:

- Sausage egg casseroles that are prepared on Friday and then baked that morning.
- Coffee, Orange, Apple, Grape Juices and milk.
- Pancakes (we cut them into angel shapes with cookie cutters) and a variety of individual jellies.
- Angel fruit kabobs (a red grape (for the head), then a mandarin orange (for the wings) and finish with a pineapple chunk (for the body).
- Bananas cut into thirds.
- Glazed, powdered and cinnamon donuts cut into quarters.

## **That morning:**

- The kitchen crew arrives early to bake casseroles, fry pancakes, make coffee and set out food.
- Icicle lights and Christmas music are turned on.
- Adult angels, dressed in white choir robes wearing tinsel halos, wait at the entrance to greet our children and guests.
- Name tags are handed to each child and then their picture is taken.
- Children file into the Fellowship Hall with parents. Trays are provided so two plates can be carried. More angels are there to assist parents.





- After all have gathered, around 9:15 a.m., the house lights are dimmed and the stage becomes the focus as children and adults act out the birth of Jesus. A newly born baby is used as our baby Jesus. Our minister reads a story that has been adapted from Luke 2 passages. The story is interspersed with Christmas carols that our adult choir sings (they too dress as angels).
- When the story is over, children are invited to come on stage and see the Christ Child and then they are dismissed to go to various classrooms to complete two Advent crafts. Before leaving Fellowship Hall, the Angel choir disperses throughout the hall and hands each child a gift from the Christ Child. We've done various gifts ranging from angel ornaments to babies in swaddling cloths.
- In the classrooms, two crafts are assembled. The paper chain of red and green is made and attached to a paper star or Christmas tree they decorate or Nativity picture that the children create. Children remove a link each day until Christmas when they remove the last link. Large plastic bags (purchased from Oriental Trading Co.) hold the craft pieces until the children arrive. Children are assisted by their guest parent.
- When the craft is over, the children go back to the main floor and pick up their photo that was printed while they ate breakfast, watched the drama and finished their crafts.
- On their way out the door, they receive a candle (set in Styrofoam and decorated with poinsettias) and a small scroll. They are told to light their candle on Christmas morning and follow the instructions on the scroll. Text of the scroll follows.



### **FAMILY CHRISTMAS WORSHIP**

#### **Light the candle. Then read aloud Luke 2: 4-20**

As a family, sing the words to "Away in a Manger"

"Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head; The stars in the sky looked down where He lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay."

Pray, "Dear Lord, on this day that we celebrate your birthday, help us remember that you came to be our Savior. Thank you for loving us. Help us live to please you. In your name we pray. Amen."

As a family sing, "O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord."

**Snuff out the candle.**

- Sometimes we have live sheep outside for the children to pet before going home.



### What if it snows?

- Our snow date is Sunday morning from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. before our first worship service begins because the hall and food have already been prepared and the children are too disappointed if we don't have the breakfast. (We had to cancel one year and didn't have a backup plan so kids were invited the following year to make up for the cancellation.)

I hope this helps you get an idea of what is involved in this program. Yours can be very simple or more elaborate. The important thing is to keep the activity centered on the preschool children's capabilities and sense of wonder. Below is a letter from a grandparent who attended for her first time with her grandsons last year:

Dear Ms. Reeder,

On Saturday, December 5, 2009 I traveled almost an hour to join my grandsons, Hunter & Austin S., for the First Christian Church's "Angel Breakfast." The event exceeded my expectations. We received a warm welcome, followed the angel footprints to the photo area and then enjoyed a delicious meal. Breakfast was followed by the glorious story of Jesus' birth and fun filled arts and crafts. You and your congregation made sure everyone enjoyed the event. I could tell that those involved with the event loved doing it as much as we loved being a part of it.

I am grateful that my daughter has found a place, like your church to help her provide pleasure, but still teach Christian values to her children, my grandchildren.

My Christmas wish is that "The Angel Breakfast" continues for many, many years.

Wishing you and your congregation a Blessed & Joyous Holiday Season.  
Deb C.



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