Here comes Advent (with more resources)

Advent.

It's that time of year when I find myself saying *REALLY?* a lot.

"Really? One more thing?"

"Really? Flames with a toddler?"

"Really? Christmas parties and music and school things and the kids are sick and and and?"

In the Advent of 2011, my thoughts on Advent were put into print. As we dive into Advent, I've dusted off my copy.

The first thing I noticed was the simple, straightforward approach I encouraged other people to take.

How have I forgotten that in my own family?

It's all too easy to make Advent difficult and complicated.

And this time of year, things are difficult and complicated enough.

I have a way of coming back to the same few Advent resources. And sometimes, I scrap them all and just try to find a moment of silence every morning.

One of my favorite "oldie but goodie" Advent resources is Karen Edmisten's No-Panic Advent series. It reminds me, every year, that I can choose to be calm. I can plan ahead. And if I don't…it's OK. My main takeaway, though, is that the family portion of Advent is about building our traditions.

When it comes to the Jesse Tree (confession: for me, it

usually doesn't), I love Christine Johnson's series. I've bought a ton of books over the years, but what I come back to is this online series.

Why not make reading part of your Advent? Years ago, I heard the idea of wrapping up all your Christmas and Advent books and unwrapping one each day, sort of like a book countdown to Christmas. (If you're organized, you could put them in a certain order. I know better than to suggest that to myself…I would just get overwhelmed by it.) If you're looking for books to include, here are five great suggestions.

Over the years, I've realized that one of the mainstays of my home decor is my Nativity scene. Oh, it takes center stage during Advent, in a way it doesn't the rest of the year. For a few years, we've added a piece of straw to the barn for every nice thing we do that day. This year, I'll be incorporating some of the ideas from this family guide to the Nativity.

> ***If you aren't already on our email list, be sure to sign up! We send out free downloads and great family activities that are only available there. (Thank me later!)***

Do you have a link or resource to share? Send it to us at takeout@osv.com so we can share it in a future issue!