



# HOOKEAD ADVENT CALENDARS

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**A** very talented quilter friend showed me an Advent calendar that she had completed for her granddaughter. My rug hooker's brain immediately wondered why I couldn't do a similar project for my three young grandsons. A rug-hooked version was about to be born.

Advent calendars, for anyone who might not know, have pockets or openings that hold little surprises. Starting on December first and every day forward until December twenty-fourth, one door is opened to reveal a surprise for that day/date. Commercial Advent calendars most often contain little chocolate figures that are happily eaten (sometimes prior to breakfast) or plastic block figurines that contribute to a background scene slowly built during the month.

Each rug-hooked calendar that I designed has 24 pockets, each of which will hold a daily surprise. I doubled 12 images on each calendar, changing the colours of the duplications both within each calendar and between calendars so that none of the 72 images were exactly

the same. I also personalized each calendar by hooking something that belongs to each of the boys. For example, one loves his black cat that has white tufts in his ears, so that pocket image is only on his calendar. Another has a multi-coloured brown-white-beige dog, and the third grandson has a special purple teddy bear that he loves.

The background material was commercial burlap pre-stamped with a festive motif. The pockets were hooked with a variety of yarns, both synthetic and 100% wool or cotton, on plain Scottish burlap. I lined the complete background and each pocket with a red material. That lining would protect against an uneven-edged surprise or excited fingers catching in and pulling out the hooked yarn were it left exposed on the reverse of the pockets. The addition of lining also made the calendars sturdier, and protected eager fingers from accidentally being punctured by the back of a numbered button.

Pockets ranged in size from 4" square (bell, gingerbread house) to 2.5" x 8.5" (stocking, candy cane) to 5" x 8" (tree). Each finished calendar measured approximately 45" x 30" once the top was folded under for a 2" hem. I sewed the edges (of both pockets and backing) with a zig-zag stitch and left them raw/frayed.

The calendars will be hung on playroom or bedroom doors with a dowel or curtain rod going through the three tabs of grosgrain ribbon sewn to the top hem. The dowel will then hang from two over-the-door hooks. As this is a first-time project, we shall see if the style and structure hold up to a month of early morning excitement!

Rather than hooking the numbers onto the pockets or the backing, I used removable (pin-back) buttons. This makes it easy for the daily surprises to be in different places on the calendar in subsequent years. On [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com), I found three shops (two in the U.S.A., one in Germany) that sold numbered buttons with different patterns and styles. I randomly attached the buttons onto or near each pocket, so that part of the surprise is finding that day's number on the calendar, before reaching into the pocket itself. The only pocket that was planned to have the same number on all three pieces was the Christmas tree — December 24<sup>th</sup>.

Planning and completing this project, in triplicate, was great fun! My rug-hooking friends in the CBS Shoreline Hookers gave me wonderful encouragement during several months of hooking, and a week or so of sewing to finish all three calendars. I also smile a thank-





you to my quilting friend for inspiring me with her sewn Advent calendar project.

My final challenge was to think of and find 72 surprises that fit into the pockets; small but interesting things for boys who are 10, 8 and 6 years old. A few will be edible but most will be playable, usable, puzzling, or practical; from kid-sized cooking utensils and measuring tapes to word jumbles and puzzles to festive candies, and even unusual USB memory sticks!

This year, all three grandsons live within an easy drive of my home, so there should be no complicated delivery issues, barring a late November snowstorm. By the way, this Grandma fills the calendar pockets only for the inaugural year. That job will be passed over to the boys' mothers and fathers for future years!

