

What is Advent?

Advent is the season during which we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus the Christ born at Bethlehem some 2000 years ago. Long before Jesus was born, the world was preparing for the promised Messiah. Prophets and holy people of the Old Testament explained that God loved human beings and that one day God would come to show the world exactly what it means to live as God wants us to. Finally God did come to live among human beings in the person of Jesus born on that first Christmas so many centuries ago. The season of Advent is the first season of the Church year and begins four Sundays before Christmas. It represents the hundreds of years during which the world was preparing for the coming of God's promised Messiah, the Christ. The world advent means coming. We use the weeks of Advent to prepare ourselves for the THREE comings of the Christ: 1. The coming of the Christ at Christmas, the first coming; 2. The coming of the Christ at the end of time, the second coming; and 3 the coming of the Christ into our hearts now, the constant coming of Christ. At Christmas, we want the Christ who will come at the end of time to be born anew in our hearts just as the Christ was born in Jesus on that first Christmas.

What is an Advent Wreath?

An Advent Wreath is a beautiful wreath we use to help us prepare during Advent for the coming of the Christ. It is a circle of evergreens with four candles around its edge and can have a fifth candle added in the center of Christmas Eve. The circular wreath has no begin and no end. It serves to remind us that God has no beginning and no end. God lived before there was a world; God lived in Jesus; God lives now and always will live. The wreath is made of evergreens. They stay green all year, never losing their needles. Since they are always alive, they are a reminder that people who love God will only live their lives now but will live forever with God.

The four candles on the outer edge represent the four weeks of Advent. Three of the candles are blue and one is pink. Blue is the Church's color for watching and waiting. Pink is a lighter, more cheerful color. One blue candle is lit the first Sunday of Advent and an additional candle each Sunday thereafter. The pink candle is lit on the third Sunday of Advent to remind us we are halfway to the day when we will rejoice at the birth of the Christ. The candle in the center is white, the Church's color for purity. It is called the Christ Candle and is lit on Christmas Eve.

An Advent Service for the Home

(One or more participants light the candle(s), the number of candles depending upon the Sunday of Advent that is being observed.)

Leader: Grace to you and peace from God our Creator and Jesus the Christ.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Rejoice, the Christ is at hand.

All: Come Christ Jesus.

Leader: (Reads Biblical passage for the day)

All: Glory to God our Creator, to Jesus the Christ, and to the Holy Spirit: as in the beginning, so now, and forever. AMEN.

(On the First Sunday, Leader may ask God's blessing on the Wreath, using the Advent Wreath Blessing.)

Leader: The peace of God be with you.

All: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray together the prayer Jesus taught us, saying...

All: (All say the Lord's Prayer together)

(An Advent Hymn may be sung)

Leader: most loving and merciful God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, bless us and keep us.

All: AMEN

(Extinguish candles at the end of the service or the end of the meal.)

Prayers for the Weeks of Advent

Advent Wreath Blessing: O God, by your word all things are made holy. We offer you this Advent Wreath which we ask you to bless. May our use of it prepare us for the great coming of Jesus the Christ who we pray to receive into our lives with joy. AMEN

First Week of Advent: (Blue Candle) O God, who sent prophets to prepare the way for the coming of the Christ: help us to hear their warning and their message of great joy which was given for all people; so that at the birthday of Jesus the Christ, we may joyfully receive into our hearts that Christ in whose name with pray. Amen.

Second Week of Advent: (Blue Candle) Most merciful God, be in our midst to cast away all works of darkness which separate us from you. In your great mercy, forgive all the things we have done that we should not have done; and all things we failed to do that we should have done; and teach us to live as Children of God; in the name of Christ we pray. AMEN

Third Week of Advent: (Pink Candle) O loving God, pour your love into our hearts so that we may love more fully all those whom you love. Help us to be understanding and responsive to the needs of others, just as you are understanding and responsive to the needs of all human being in sending us Jesus the Christ in whose name we pray. AMEN.

Fourth Week of Advent: (Blue Candle) Blessed God, we await the coming of Jesus the Christ. In this last week of our waiting, bring us to greater love for all your creations by learning to show greater respect and honor for all the created order, that our world may be a happy joyful place into which the Christ may come once again. AMEN

Christmas Eve: (White Candle placed in center.) Most holy God, on this holiest of nights, as we light the pure white Christ Candle, may its brightness be reflected in our hearts and lives as we show forth your love in our lives. AMEN.



What is a Jesse Tree?

A Jesse Tree is a small evergreen or bare branch from any tree that is set up during Advent. What makes this tree special are the symbols that decorate it. These symbols change an ordinary tree or branch into a Jesse Tree. Jesse lived over 3000 years ago. He was the father of David, the great King of Israel. Long after Jesse and David lived, Matthew and Luke wrote that Jesus was born into this royal family. They said Jesse, David, and their children and grandchildren, plus all the holy women and men of the Bible who inspired them, make up the spiritual family of Jesus. We can learn some of these people are by reading about them in the Bible and making a symbol to represent each of them. These symbols are then hung on the Jesse Tree.

Biblical References for Jesse Tree Symbols

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| Ark for Noah | Genesis 6-8 |
| Lamb for Isaac | Genesis 22: 1-19 |
| Water Jug for Rebekah | Genesis 24: 1-67 |
| Jacob's Ladder | Genesis 28: 10-22 |
| Shepherd's Staff for Rachel | Genesis 29: 1-20 |
| Coat for Joseph | Genesis 37 |
| Burning Bush for Moses | Exodus 3 |
| Palm Tree for Deborah | Judges 4: 4-5 |
| Heart for Ruth | Ruth 1: 15-18 |
| Harp for David | 1 Samuel 16: 14-23 |
| Crown for Solomon | 1 Kings 1: 22-48 |
| Dove for Elisha | 2 Kings 5: 1-27 |
| Great Fish for Jonah | Jonah 1 |
| Rose for Isaiah | Isaiah 35: 1-2 |
| Scroll of the Law for Huldah | 2 Chronicles 34: 14-28 |
| Wheel for Ezekiel | Ezekiel 1: 15-21 |
| Lion for Daniel | Daniel 6: 1-24 |
| Crown and Scepter for Esther | Esther 2: 1-18 |
| Lily for Mary | Traditional |
| Camel for the Magi | Matthew 2: 1-12 |
| Star for the Magi | Matthew 2: 1-12 |

Suggested Bible Passages for Advent Ceremony

First Week

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| Sunday | John 1: 9-14, 16-17 |
| Monday | John 3: 16-21 |
| Tuesday | Isaiah 60: 1-3 |
| Wednesday | Psalms 43: 3-5 |
| Thursday | Isaiah 58: 6-9 |
| Friday | 1 John 2: 8-11 |
| Saturday | 1 John 3: 1-2, 7-10 |

Second Week

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| Sunday | Isaiah 40: 1-5 |
| Monday | Genesis 3: 1-7 |
| Tuesday | Genesis 3: 8-13, 22-23 |
| Wednesday | Hosea 11: 3-4 |
| Thursday | Psalms 130 |
| Friday | Micah 6: 6-8 |
| Saturday | Jeremiah 14: 8-9 |

Third Week

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| Sunday | Isaiah 9: 6-7 |
| Monday | Isaiah 7: 10-14 |
| Tuesday | Isaiah 11: 1-6 |
| Wednesday | Isaiah 40: 10-11 |
| Thursday | Isaiah 52: 7 |
| Friday | Jeremiah 33: 14-16 |
| Saturday | Malachi 3: 1-2 |

Fourth Week

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| Sunday | Matthew 1: 18-25 |
| Monday | Luke 1: 26-33 |
| Tuesday | Luke 1: 34-35, 38 |
| Wednesday | Luke 1: 39-45 |
| Thursday | Luke 1: 46-56 |
| Friday | Luke 1: 57-66 |
| Saturday | Luke 1: 67-80 |

Christmas Eve Luke 2: 1-20



ADVENT IN THE HOME