

ADVENT



When Advent Wreaths are decorated, the materials used have symbolic meaning.

Evergreens remind us of our eternal life with Christ.

Holly represents the crown of thorns from the passion of Jesus.

Pinecones symbolize Christ's Resurrection.

Since circles have no beginning and no end, the circular shape of Advent Wreaths is used to symbolize God the father and eternal life.

The wreath (or candleholder) holds four Advent candles which are lit one by one throughout the four weeks of Advent.

There are three purple candles and one pink candle in an Advent Wreath. Each candle represents 1,000 years. Added together, the four candles symbolize the 4,000 years that humanity waited for the Savior.

The burning flame is a visual reminder that
Christ is "the light of the world."
(John 8:12)

Advent lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Then, the new Christian year begins with a twelve-day celebration of Christmastide, starting on Christmas Eve until Epiphany on January 6. Advent 2019 begins on Sunday, December 1st and ends on Tuesday, December 24.

Advent is a time of remembrance and anticipation.

The first two Sundays in Advent (through December 16th) look forward to Christ's second coming and the last two Sundays (December 17th – 24th) look at the past to remember Christ's birth. During Advent there is reflection on the violence and evil in the world. It is also the time to think of our present while looking forward to our future Exodus. Advent gives us the time to consider our sinful ways and our need for grace. Our thoughts and reflections should lead us to pray for the Holy Spirit to renew his work in conforming us into the image of Christ.

Advent Wreath and Candles

The Advent wreath first appeared in Germany in 1839. A Lutheran minister working at a mission for children created a wreath out of the wheel of a cart. He placed twenty small red candles and four large white candles inside the ring. The red candles were lit on weekdays and the four white candles were lit on Sundays. Eventually, the Advent wreath was created out of evergreens, symbolizing everlasting life in the midst of winter and death. The circle reminds us of God's unending love and the eternal life He makes possible.

Advent candles are often nestled in the evergreen wreath. Today's decorations can also include holly and berries. Their red color points ahead to Jesus' sacrifice and death. Pinecones can symbolize the new life that Jesus brings through His resurrection. Families begin lighting a candle on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, and they light another candle each subsequent Sunday.

The most common Advent candle tradition involves four candles. A new candle is lit on each of the four Sundays before Christmas. Each candle represents something different, although traditions vary. The four candles traditionally represent hope, faith, joy, and peace. Often, the first, second, and fourth candles are purple; the third candle is pink. Sometimes all the candles are red; in other traditions, all four candles are blue or white. Occasionally, a fifth white candle is placed in the middle and is lit on Christmas Day to celebrate Jesus' birth. While Advent is certainly a time of celebration and anticipation of Christ's birth, it is more than that. It is only in the shadow of Advent that the miracle of Christmas can be fully understood and appreciated, and it is only in the light of Christmas that the Christian life makes any sense. It is between the fulfilled promise of Christ's first coming and the yet-to-be-fulfilled promise of his second coming that our faith is tested and strengthened. The promise for Israel and the promise for the church is Jesus Christ; he has come, and he will come again. This is the essence of Advent.

Advent Readings

Advent readings are themed Scripture readings for each Sunday of Advent. The four weeks of Advent are broken down into the themes:

- Hope (or promise)
- Preparation (waiting or prophecy)
- Joy (peace)
- Love (adoration)

Advent is a time of expectation and hope. "Advent" means "arrival" or "coming," and it prompts us to pause each day in December and remember why Jesus came at Christmas. Traditions vary by country, but common ways of commemorating Jesus' birth are through Advent calendars, wreaths, and candles. Ideally, any Advent tradition should involve families in a fun activity each day of December, helping them remember why we celebrate Christmas.

The History of Advent -The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming," which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. Most know Advent today as a time of anticipation and expectation of the birth of Christ. However, Advent began as early as the 4th and 5th centuries as a time of fasting and prayer for new Christians. The first mention of Advent occurred in the 300's A.D at a meeting of church leaders called the Council of Sargossa. It gradually developed into a season that stretched across the month of December.

Advent Wreath Prayers for Lighting the Candles - Meaning & Symbolism of the Advent Candles

Advent candles shine brightly in the midst of darkness, symbolizing and reminding us that Jesus came as Light into our dark world. The candles are often set in a circular Advent wreath. In Scandinavia, Lutheran churches light a candle each day of December; by Christmas, they have twenty-four candles burning. Another Advent candle option is a single candle with twenty-four marks on the side--the candle is lit each day and allowed to melt down to the next day's mark.

The most common Advent candle tradition, however, involves four candles around the wreath. A new candle is lit on each of the four Sundays before Christmas. Each candle represents something different, although traditions vary.

The **first candle** symbolizes **hope** and is called the "Prophet's Candle." The prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah's arrival.

The **second candle** represents **faith** and is called "Bethlehem's Candle." Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is also the birthplace of King David.

The **third candle** symbolizes **joy** and is called the "Shepherd's Candle." To the shepherd's great joy, the angels announced that Jesus came for humble, unimportant people like them, too. In liturgy, the color rose signifies joy.

The **fourth candle** represents **peace** and is called the "Angel's Candle." The angels announced that Jesus came to bring peace--He came to bring people close to God and to each other again.

The (optional) **fifth candle** represents **light and purity** and is called "Christ's candle." It is placed in the middle and is lit on Christmas Day.

A few other Advent traditions practiced across the world include the following: In Eastern Orthodox churches, believers participate in a Nativity Fast that begins November 15 and ends December 24. In this fast, they abstain from meat, dairy, fish, wine, and oil. They hope the fast will help them to better fix their eyes on God and His Kingdom.

In much of the Spanish-speaking world, a custom called "Posadas" is practiced. "Posadas" means "shelter" or "lodging," and it is done from December 16-24. A group of people re-enact Joseph and Mary's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They plan a route and travel from house to house, asking for lodging. Each home plays the role of "innkeeper" and refuses to host them. At the last house, everyone is invited inside for prayer and refreshments.

The Jesse tree involves homemade ornaments that are hung on a small tree. The ornaments represent an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus, or they may represent ancient ancestors in the lineage of Jesus. Various books are available to use along with the Jesse ornaments.

Santa Lucia (or St. Lucy) is done on the morning of December 13. The oldest daughter in the house dresses in a white robe with a red sash, and she wears a wreath with lighted candles on her head. She carries a breakfast of coffee, gingerbread cookies, and saffron buns to her parent's bedroom. The younger daughters follow the eldest, carrying a single candle. The brothers, called "star boys," wear tall, pointed hats.

In China, Christians light their homes with decorative paper lanterns. Some also decorate a "Tree of Light" with paper chains or flowers.

A German named Gerhard Lang the first printed **Advent calendar** was created in 1908. As a boy, his mom would sew twenty-four cookies onto the lid of a box. Each day of December, he ate a cookie. Later he created a calendar and the first 24 days of December would be recognized with a small treat. During Advent, let's remember the beauty and grace of Jesus. He entered our dark, broken world on the first Christmas long ago, and He's working to restore the world to light, peace, and life.

May your family find rich blessings from incorporating the advent wreath and other traditions into your celebration of this season.

Violet is a liturgical color that is used to signify a time of penance, sacrifice, and prayer.

During the first, second, and fourth weeks of Advent we light violet candles.

The Third Sunday of Advent is called *Gaudete* (Latin for "Rejoice") Sunday. On this day we celebrate that our wait for Christmas is almost over.

The first Advent candle, called the "Prophet's Candle," symbolizes *Hope*, and reminds us that Jesus is coming.

The second Advent candle, called the "Bethlehem Candle," symbolizes *Faith*, and reminds us of Mary and Joseph's difficult journey to Bethlehem.

The third Advent candle, called the "Shepherd's Candle," symbolizes *Joy*, and reminds us of the joy the world experienced when Jesus was born.

The fourth Advent candle, called the "Angel's Candle," symbolizes *Peace* and reminds us of the message of the angels: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."

Daily Advent Prayer

“Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise.”

As we begin Advent, we light one candle in the midst of all the darkness in our lives and in the world. It symbolizes our longing, our desire, our hope. Three “advents” or “comings” shape our desire. We want to be renewed in a sense that Jesus came to save us from our sin and death. We want to experience his coming to us now, in our everyday lives, to help us live our lives with meaning and purpose. And we want to prepare for his coming to meet us at the end of our lives on this earth.

So, we begin with our longing, our desire and our hope.

Each day this week, light the first candle, take a few moments to focus. We could pause for a minute at the side of our bed, or while putting on our slippers or our robe, and light an *inner* candle. While saying something like - Let today’s candle be my reminder of my hope in your coming and my eternal life.

Each day this week ask everyone in your home to say something about what it means to them today to light the candle of hope. Thinking about what hope means from a spiritual perspective can bring us closer to God.

And every night this week, give thanks for your relationship with God and for the day that he gave you.

**Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit your people.
We await your coming. Come, O Lord.**

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.