

Lighting the Advent Wreath



Advent comes from the Latin word 'adventus' meaning 'Coming.' Advent begins the church year starting four Sundays before Christmas. The season of Advent has been set aside as a time of preparation since the 6th century. Advent is a time for preparing for Christ's second coming, even as we remember and celebrate his first coming at Christmas. This is why the colour of the season of Lent is used, purple or blue, the colours also of Lent, of forgiveness and repentance.

Traditions vary from church to church, but usually one week, either week three or four in Advent, is set aside as more celebratory than others. Rose is the colour of this week rather than purple, which is why a rose candle is used. In our churches we will celebrate this week on the fourth Sunday of Advent, when we remember Mary, the mother of Jesus to whom is attributed that great song of joy, the Magnificat.

First Candle - The Patriachs

Leader: May the joy and peace of God fill our hearts as we wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Thanks be to God

Leader: Today is the First Sunday of Advent, we will light a candle to remember the patriachs.

Genesis Chapter 12

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Abraham was obedient to God and left his home to go to a distant land. God told Abraham that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed. This blessing would come because he trusted and put his hope in God. The Gospel writer Matthew traces the ancestry of Jesus back through the Old Testament to Abraham. So it was that the promise was fulfilled, that all the nations of the world were blessed through the obedience of Abraham.

(A person lights the first candle here)

Leader: Let us pray:

All: God of Abraham and all the patriachs of old, you are our Father too. Help us as we await the coming of Jesus to show the same obedience and willingness as Abraham. May we seek always to follow your path for our lives.

Second Candle - The Prophets

Leader: May the joy and peace of God fill our hearts as we wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Thanks be to God

Leader: Last Sunday we lit the First Candle in our Advent Wreath, and celebrated the patriarchs,

(A person lights the first candle)

Today is the Second Sunday of Advent and we will light a candle to remember the prophets.

The prophet Isaiah said

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Today, as we light the Second Candle of Advent, we remember the prophets who spoke of the coming of Christ. They told of how a Saviour would be born, a king in the line of King David. The prophet Isaiah called Christ "the Prince of Peace" and told us how he would rule the world wisely and bless all the nations.

(A person lights the second candle)

Leader: Let us pray:

All: Lord Jesus, Light of the World, the prophets said you would bring peace and save your people from trouble. Give peace in our hearts at Christmastide.

Third Candle - John The Baptist

Leader: May the joy and peace of God fill our hearts as we wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Thanks be to God

Leader: Last Sunday we lit two candles to remember the patriarchs and the prophets

(A person lights the first and second candles)

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent and we will light a candle to remember John the Baptist

Matthew Chapter 3

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

'A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.' John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

In their old age God gave to Zechariah and Elisabeth a son called John. John spoke to the people bravely in the desert denying his own comforts and prepared to die for what he believed. John taught that we should share what we have with others, treat each other kindly and show God's love. He did this because he cared for people and wanted them to repent and find God's forgiveness.

(A person lights the third candle)

Leader: Let us pray:

All: Lord God, your witness John the Baptist grew up strong in spirit and prepared people for the coming of Jesus. He loved your people and baptized them in the River Jordan to wash away their sins. Help us to have the same love, that we would be witnesses to him and spread the good news of your love.

Fourth Candle - Mary the Mother of Jesus *(Pink candle)*

Leader: May the joy and peace of God fill our hearts as we wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Thanks be to God

Last Sunday we lit candles to remember the patriarchs, the prophets and John the Baptist.

(A person lights the first, second and third candles)

Today we light the Fourth Candle of Advent to remember Mary the mother of Jesus

Luke Chapter 1

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

When the angel Gabriel told Mary that a special child would be born to her she was filled with joy. She sang a song that began with the words: "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. Just as the birth of Jesus gave great joy to his mother, so his presence in the world gave joy to those who had none before. He healed them and gave them hope and peace when they believed in him.

(Light the fourth pink candle now.)

Leader: Let us pray:

All: Lord God, may we follow the example of Mary and serve you in joyful obedience. In all circumstances give us trust in your promises and help us to faithfully serve you, all of our days.

The Last Candle - The Birth of Christ

Christmas Day

Leader: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Leader: We have lit candles to remember the patriarchs, the prophets, John the Baptist and Mary the mother of Jesus.

(Each candle will be lit as the reader speaks)

Today we light the candle which celebrates the birth of Jesus

Luke Chapter 2

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

We light this last candle to remember the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The promise to Abraham, foretold by the prophets, proclaimed by John the Baptist and made flesh by the holy Virgin Mary. Lord Jesus you have come to us once again. We remember your birth in Bethlehem and celebrate your presence among your people here today.

(Light the white Christ candle now.)

Leader: Let us pray

Lord, you come as a tiny, fragile baby; yet we know that you are God and you are with us. May the flame of this candle remind us that you are the light of the world and that if we follow you, we will never walk in darkness, but will have the true light of life. Amen

