

ADVENT WREATH

The Advent Wreath is probably the most popular symbol of Advent. Its bright candles dominate the wreath, symbols of the Light of the World who overcomes the darkness and warms a weary world. The traditional circular wreath reminds us that God, like the circle, has no beginning and no end. Evergreens on the wreath symbolize our everlasting relationship with God, the source of continuous new life. The four candles signify the four weeks in Advent. Lit week by week, first one, then two, three, and finally four candles at a time, three of the candles are purple or royal blue, signifying royalty and hope as the people of God look forward to Christ's coming, and one candle is pink or rose colored. This candle has always been connected with joy, because the third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete Sunday (*gaudete* means rejoice in Latin). Other than signifying the progression of the weeks of Advent, the meaning of each candle has multiple traditions ~ each of which are fun to use. There is no one way to mark Advent. This Advent Wreath liturgy makes use of the scripture readings for each week of Advent in the Year C, which makes prominent use of the Gospel of Luke. Advent 2021 happens to be Year C. Another tradition is to assign the values of hope, love, joy, and peace to each week. Use this liturgy as you wish. If you are with people, share your thoughts on the readings. If you are with children, simply tell the story if you wish instead of reading the scripture verses.

ADVENT WREATH CEREMONY

The First Sunday of Advent

Leader: Our God is a God of promise.

All: Help us to believe in Your promises, O God.

A Reading from Jeremiah 33:14-16 (from The Common English Bible)

The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill my gracious promise with the people of Israel and Judah. In those days and at that time, I will raise up a righteous branch from David's line, who will do what is just and right in the land. In those days, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is what he will be called: The LORD Is Our Righteousness.

Leader: We ask you to bless this wreath, O Lord, that it will remind us throughout the days of Advent of your loving presence among us. **AMEN.**

Leader: We light this first candle as a pledge of our trust in your promise to send us Jesus, who will show us how to do what is right and just.

One candle is lit this week. Pause for a moment of silence.

Leader: Let us pray.

Loving God, God of infinite possibilities, you keep your promises to us even when we have great difficulty keeping ours to you. As we enter into this season of Advent, help us to remember that we are not alone. Remind us that you are with us, helping us to imagine and

work toward a better life for ourselves, those we love, our community, and the world. We ask this through Jesus, who is the fulfillment of your promise. **AMEN.**

Leader: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

The Second Sunday of Advent

Leader: A voice cries out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

All: Help us to prepare for your coming, O Lord.

A Reading from Luke 3:1-6 (from The Common English Bible)

In the fifteenth year of the rule of the emperor Tiberius—when Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea and Herod was ruler over Galilee, his brother Philip was ruler over Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was ruler over Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—God’s word came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. John went throughout the region of the Jordan River, calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. This is just as it was written in the scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

A voice crying out in the wilderness:

*“Prepare the way for the Lord;
make his paths straight.*

*Every valley will be filled,
and every mountain and hill will be leveled.*

*The crooked will be made straight
and the rough places made smooth.*

All people will see God’s salvation.”

Leader: We Light this second candle in sure and certain hope that you will prepare our hearts to receive our Savior.

Two candles are lit. Pause for a moment of silence.

Leader: Let us pray.

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

Leader: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

The Third Sunday of Advent

Leader: Rejoice with song, all people, for God's singing fills the heavens and the earth.

All: Let everyone know: God is our strength and song and salvation.

A Reading from Zephaniah 3:14-20 (from the Common English Bible)

Rejoice, Daughter Zion! Shout, Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem.

The LORD has removed your judgment;

he has turned away your enemy.

The LORD, the king of Israel, is in your midst;

you will no longer fear evil.

On that day, it will be said to Jerusalem:

Don't fear, Zion.

Don't let your hands fall.

The LORD your God is in your midst—a warrior bringing victory.

He will create calm with his love;

he will rejoice over you with singing.

I will remove from you those worried about the appointed feasts.

They have been a burden for her, a reproach.

Watch what I am about to do to all your oppressors at that time.

I will deliver the lame;

I will gather the outcast.

I will change their shame into praise and fame throughout the earth.

At that time, I will bring all of you back,

at the time when I gather you.

I will give you fame and praise among all the neighboring peoples

when I restore your possessions and you can see them—says the LORD.

Leader: We light this third candle in joyful expectation that the Lord comes to make all things new.

Three candles are lit. Pause for a moment of silence.

Leader: Let us pray.

O Christ, we watch and wait for the warmth and light of your presence. As candlelight is not overcome by darkness, we rejoice that your light is radiant within us, despite the wintry seasons of our lives. We live with hope that your birth will occur in every heart and the world will fall to its knees in joy. **AMEN.**

Leader: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Leader: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.

All: My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

A Reading from Luke 1:39-56 (from the Common English Bible)

Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

Mary said, "With all my heart I glorify the Lord! In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior. He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant. Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name. He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations. He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed. He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, just as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever." Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home.

Leader: O God, as we light this fourth candle, we rejoice as did Mary, that you love us enough to send us your Son.

Four candles are lit. Pause for a moment of silence.

Leader: Let us pray.

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **AMEN.**

Leader: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.