



Lighting the Advent Wreath 2015

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 also 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.

The Advent Wreath has four purple candles and one of white. The first candle is lit on Advent Sunday; additional ones are lit, one on each Sunday, and the white on Christmas Day.

Traditions vary from church to church, but usually one week, in Advent, is set aside as more celebratory than others. Rose or pink is the colour of this week rather than purple, which is why a pink 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.

Week One

The Candle of Hope

The Patriarchs

We hear the message of hope told to Abraham

Week Two

The Candle of Peace

The Prophets

We hear from Isaiah of one
who will be born Prince of Peace

Week Three

The Candle of Love

John the Baptist

John the Baptist spoke bravely
that we should share what we have with others,
treat each other kindly and show God's love

Week Four

The Candle of Joy

Mary the Mother of Jesus

Mary was filled with Joy when she knew
that she would become the mother of Jesus

Christmas Day

The Birth of Jesus

First Candle - The Candle of Hope (Purple Candle)

The Patriarchs, Abraham, the Old Testament Ancestors of Jesus

Leader: May your hearts be filled with hope as you hear the promises God made to bless all the peoples on earth through Abraham, the father of our faith.

All: **Thanks be to God**

Leader: Today is the First Sunday of Advent, we will light a candle to remember the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the ancestors of our faith.

Genesis Chapter 12

The LORD had said to Abraham, “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.”

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation. Blessed be God for ever.

(A person lights the first candle here)

Leader: Let us pray:

**Lord Jesus, light of the world,
born in David’s city of Bethlehem,
born like him to be a king:
be born in our hearts at Christmas,
be King of our lives today.**

Second Candle - The Candle of Peace (Purple Candle)

The prophets who foretold the birth of Jesus

Leader: May your hearts be filled with peace as you hear the words of the prophet Isaiah who told of one who would be born the Prince of Peace.

All: **Thanks be to God**

Leader: Last Sunday we lit the First Candle of Hope in our Advent Wreath, and celebrated the patriarchs. We light it again as we place our hope in Jesus the blessing of God for all nations.

(A person now lights the first candle)

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 Counsellor, 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.

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation. Blessed be God for ever.

(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 in trouble.
Give peace in our hearts at Christmas
and show all the world God's love.**

Third Candle - The Candle of Love (Purple Candle)

John The Baptist

Leader: May your hearts be filled with God's love towards all people as you consider the life of sacrifice and encouragement of John the Baptist.

All: **Thanks be to God**

Last Sunday we lit the Candles of Hope and Peace.

(A person now lights the Candles of Hope, and Peace.)

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent and we light the Candle of Love and 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.'

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Saviour and King of the ages. Blessed be God for ever.

(A person now lights the third candle)

Leader: Let us pray:

All: **Lord Jesus, light of the world,
John told the people to prepare,
for you were very near.
As Christmas grows closer day by day,
help us to be ready to welcome you now.**

Fourth Candle - The Candle of Joy (Pink candle)

Mary the Mother of Jesus

Leader: May your hearts be filled with joy as you hear the song of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

All: **Thanks be to God**

Leader: Last Sunday we lit the Candles of Hope, Peace and Love
(A person now lights the Candles of Hope, Peace, and Love)

Today we light the Fourth Candle of Advent, the Candle of Joy, as we remember Mary the mother of Jesus

Luke Chapter 1 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your light has shone in our darkened world through the child-bearing of blessed Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory may daily be renewed in your image and prepared like her for the coming of your Son, who is the Lord and Saviour of all. Blessed be God for ever. *(Light the fourth pink candle now.)*

Leader: Let us pray:

All: Lord Jesus, light of the world, blessed is Gabriel, who brought good news; blessed is Mary, your mother and ours. Bless your Church preparing for Christmas; and bless us your children, who long for your coming.

The Last Candle - The Birth of Christ (White Candle)

Jesus is born on Christmas Day

Leader: Today we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord

All: **Thanks be to God**

Leader: Today is Christmas Day the day on which we celebrate the gift to us of the birth of Jesus and recall the hope we have in Christ. Today we light again the Candles of Hope, Peace, Love and Joy.

(Each candle will be lit as the reader speaks)

First Candle - We speak of hope - because God keeps his promises to us.

Second Candle - We work for peace - because Jesus is the 'Prince of Peace' and he calls his children to work for peace in his name.

Third Candle - We show love - because Jesus gave everything for us and led us to know the forgiveness of God.

Fourth Candle - We share joy - because the Holy Spirit fills our hearts and minds with the presence of God

Last Candle Now we light our last candle to remember the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ which we celebrate this Christmas Day.

Luke 2

And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

(Light the white Christ Candle now.)

God our Father, today the Saviour is born and those who live in darkness are seeing a great light. Help us, who greet the birth of Christ with joy, to live in the light of your Son and to share the good news of your love. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who has come into the world.

Amen.

Leader: Let us pray

All: **Lord Jesus, 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**



Advent Hymn

We will sing one verse every week after the candle is lit

Advent 1

Advent candles tell their story, as we watch and pray,
longing for the Day of Glory, “Come, Lord, soon”, we say,
Pain and sorrow, tears and sadness
changed for gladness, on that day.

Advent 2

Prophet voices loudly crying, making pathways clear,
glimpses glory, self-denying, calling all to hear.
Through their message – challenged, shaken –
hearts awaken: God is near.

Advent 3

John the Baptist, by his preaching, and by water poured,
brought to those who heard his teaching, news of hope restored:
“Keep your vision strong and steady,
and be ready, for the Lord.

Advent 4

Mary’s gift, beyond all telling, was to give Christ room.
She gave God a human dwelling, in a mother’s womb.
Who could guess the final story?
cross and glory; Empty tomb!

Christmas Day

Advent candles tell their story, on this Christmas Day.
Those who waited for God’s glory: they prepared the way.
Christ is with us: loving, giving,
in us living, here today!

Mark Earey (born 1965)

Tune: Angel Voices