

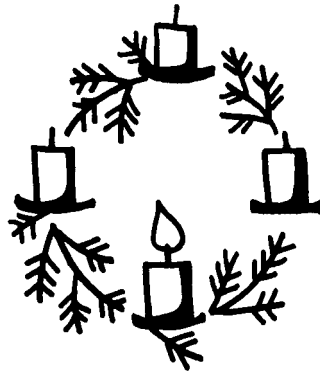
Advent



The Advent wreath dates back to ancient celebrations of the winter solstice that time in the year when the sun reaches its southernmost point in the heavens and the days are the darkest and most gloomy. Because they longed for the return of the sun's light and life, the ancients stopped all usual activity, sacrificed the use of their wagon wheels and hung them up, festooned with lights and greens in their celebration halls.

There they awaited the return of their sun-god, thinking of the warmth and life he brought. Celebrations culminated in the "nativity" of the sun - the turning point of the year.

As Christians, we use the same meaningful custom to anticipate the feast of light and life; the nativity of the Savior. We add one light on the wreath for each Sunday in Advent. We think of the darkness after Adam's sin and watch the growing hope and light as the prophets and the Virgin help us prepare for His saving birth.



Gathering around a traditional Advent wreath
or a single candle
reminds us that Christ is in our midst
even as we 'prepare the way'
for celebrating the feast of Christmas.

*Sit quietly. Prepare your innermost heart to hear the Word
and to allow the light of the candle to fill you.*

Prayer: Holy Light, present within and
among us, enlighten our hearts and minds
to hear your Word. Amen.

*As the Scripture is read,
listen for a Word or phrase that speaks to your heart.*

Scripture: The Gospel of the First Sunday of Advent

Matthew 24:37-44

*After a period of quiet reflection, share only the one word
or phrase you hold in your heart with those present.*

This reflection may be read aloud or silently. A time of sharing can follow.

Reflection: We are always challenged to be alert and attentive
in sharing love, truth and goodness with others.
This Scripture selection reminds us, during this special season,
'to stay awake' and 'be prepared' at any moment to encounter,
God's Presence. When have we been 'alert and attentive' to Love's
desire to be given and/or received?
May it be said of us, "See how they love one another"
as we walk with a deeper awareness of Love Incarnate
in our midst.

Prayer: Holy Light, be with us these days as we walk more conscious
of the Light within us. May we share Light with others, thus lightening their day. AMEN.



Gathering around a traditional Advent wreath
or a single candle
reminds us that Christ is in our midst
even as we ‘prepare the way’
for celebrating the feast of Christmas.

*Sit quietly. Prepare your innermost heart to hear the Word
and to allow the light of the candle to fill you.*

Prayer: Holy One of Spirit and Fire, present within and
among us, prepare our hearts and minds
to hear your Word. Amen.

*As the Scripture is read,
listen for a Word or phrase that speaks to your heart.*

Scripture: The Gospel of the Second Sunday of Advent

Matthew 3:1-12

*After a period of quiet reflect, share only the one word
or phrase you hold in your heart with those present.*

This reflection may be read aloud or silently. A time of sharing can follow.

Reflection: We know it takes a lot of energy and time to see the ‘fruits’
of our justice ministry efforts. We believe our passion,
the Spirit and fire within us,
is given to us as God’s gift for the transformation of the world in our day.
When we have heard the ‘voice of one crying out in the desert,’
do we trust that our efforts will bear fruit in due time?
Can we cast our frustrations and disappointments into God’s
‘unquenchable fire’ and let light, strength and new life take hold?
Like John the Baptist, we may not live to see our ‘preaching’
of word and deed bear fruit, but may it be said of us, “See how they love one another”
as we walk with a deeper awareness of Love Incarnate in our midst.

Prayer: Holy One of Spirit and Fire, be with us these days
as we walk more intentionally aware of ‘making straight the path’
and bearing good fruit for those in need.
May we share willingly and generously with others, thus offering a
gift of goodness for their day. AMEN.



Gathering around a traditional Advent wreath
or a single candle
reminds us that Christ is in our midst
even as we 'prepare the way'
for celebrating the feast of Christmas.

*Sit quietly. Prepare your innermost heart to hear the Word
and to allow the light of the candle to fill you.*

Prayer: Holy One of Power and Healing, present within and
among us, gift our hearts and minds with
the power of your healing Word. Amen.

*As the Scripture is read,
listen for a Word or phrase that speaks to your heart.*

Scripture: The Gospel of Third Sunday of Advent

Matthew 11: 2-11

*After a period of quiet reflection, share only the one word
or phrase you hold in your heart with those present.*

This reflection may be read aloud or silently. A time of sharing can follow.

Reflection: We can usually recall someone who was a model or mentor
for us on our spiritual journey.

This Advent season invites us to reflect on
when and how we have been the model or mentor!

It is the quality of our words and deeds, our 'actions on behalf of justice,'
that allows others to know we are followers of 'the one who is to come.'

Every day in our actions towards one another,
may it be said of us: "See how they love one another"
as we walk with a deeper awareness of Love Incarnate in our midst.

Prayer: Holy One of Power and Healing, empower us to be stronger leaders
for justice, peace and healing within our own relationships, work and world.

May we continue to build right relationship with everyone
and for all of Creation. AMEN.



Gathering around a traditional Advent wreath
or a single candle
reminds us that Christ is in our midst
even as we ‘prepare the way’
for celebrating the feast of Christmas.

*Sit quietly. Prepare your innermost heart to hear the Word
and to allow the light of the candle to fill you.*

Prayer: Creator of new life and all good dreams, present within and
among us, expand our hearts and minds to hear your Word. Amen.

*As the Scripture is read,
listen for a Word or phrase that speaks to your heart.*

Scripture: The Gospel of the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Matthew 1: 18-24

*After a period of quiet reflection, share only the one Word
or phrase you hold in your heart with those present.*

This reflection may be read aloud or silently. A time of sharing can follow.

Reflection: We always get excited with new life: A child, a season,
a healing, or however we name ‘newness of life.’

It is important we remember our need to be ‘life-bearers’ and
ones who bring newness of life to others.

The Spirit of God dwells waiting to be born anew in us each day.

Like Joseph, we need to believe our dreams and not let fear hold us back.

What are the ways fear holds us back from actualizing our dreams?

As Advent ends and the Christmas season begins, let us recommit to bringing

newness of life to our dreams of a world of love, peace and justice,

so it will be said of us, “See how they love one another”

as we walk with a deeper awareness of Love Incarnate in our midst.

Prayer: Holy Creator of new life and all good dreams,
refresh us these days as we walk more humbly, aware of the newness
our dreams can bring to a world waiting for love.

May we share our life and our dreams with others,
thus offering new hope for their day. AMEN.