



Celebrating
Advent
in the Home

Advent is a season of wonder,
openness, and new beginnings.

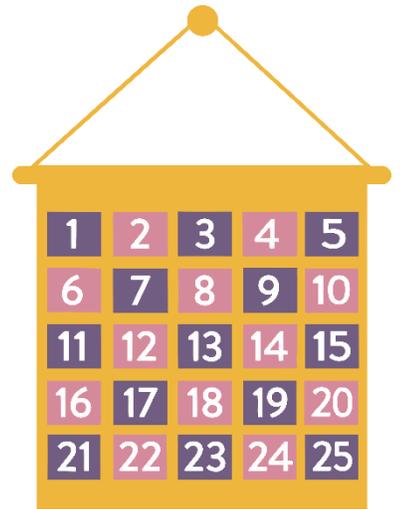
Advent

Christmas has increasingly become a holiday cut off from its purpose of celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, important for Christians to recapture the season of Advent as a time for preparing for Christmas. An Advent wreath service takes only a few minutes each night, yet it can become a wonderful time to center oneself or the whole family with a nightly remembrance of Christ's Incarnation and promised return. It is a time to celebrate God's promise to always be with us.

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 for Christmas since at least the last half of the 6th century. Advent is a time for self-examination and asking for forgiveness as the church is preparing for Christ's Second Coming even as it prepares for Christmas. This is why the color of the season is purple (or sometimes blue), which is used for marking Lent, the season of self-examination preceding Easter. The third week in Advent is set aside as more celebratory than the others. Rose is the color of this week rather than purple to mark the week, which is why a rose candle is used in Advent wreaths.

An Advent Calendar

Another way to mark the days in Advent is to use an Advent calendar. These calendars usually have a door to open each night to reveal a picture or an object (such as a small toy or candy). The days of Advent vary each year, so store-bought Advent calendars usually have 24 doors, one for each day in December leading up to Christmas. Opening an Advent calendar may follow the Advent Wreath service to more closely tie the service itself to the countdown of days.



A Nativity Scene



A nativity scene (sometimes called a crèche) is yet another way to highlight the season of Advent. Instead of putting out the whole set at once, try building the scene slowly. Begin with the manger the first week. Add a few animals the second week. Then add Mary and Joseph on the third week. On Christmas Eve add the baby Jesus and any additional figures.

The wise men and camels don't arrive until Epiphany (January 6). This increases the feeling of anticipation that is Advent.

A Jesse Tree

The 11th chapter of Isaiah describes the ideal king in the line of Israel's great king, David. The first verse of that chapter says, *A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.* Jesse was King David's father. The image of a branch growing out of the roots of Jesse points to a new king in David's line. Christians know that this is fulfilled in Jesus, the King of Kings, who is a descendent of Jesse. One tradition is to decorate a tree branch with symbols that remember other important persons from the Old Testament. The symbols on the "Jesse Tree" remind us that our belief grows out of deep roots of thousands of years of ancestors in the faith.

One way to create a Jesse Tree is to place a suitable tree branch in a large tin can (such as a coffee can) and anchor it with rocks. Then create the symbols on construction paper. Punch a hole in the paper ornament with a hole punch. Then attach the ornament to the tree branch with yarn. Creating a Jesse Tree can be connected to an Advent wreath service by adding a new ornament each evening at the time of the service.



Symbols for the Jesse Tree draw from images in the Old Testament. Possible symbols and their scripture references are on the following page.

Jesse Tree Symbols

The following list gives 25 suggestions for symbols to use in decorating a Jesse Tree along with the scripture references for the symbol. These 25 symbols would allow a new ornament to be added to the tree each day in December leading up to Christmas.

Person	Symbol	Scripture Passage
Adam	Male Figure	Genesis 2:7
Eve	Female Figure	Genesis 2:21-23
Noah	Rainbow	Genesis 9:11-17
Abraham	Tree	Genesis 18:1
Sarah	Tent	Genesis 18:9-14
Isaac	Ram	Genesis 22:13-14
Rebekah	Camel	Genesis 24:63-67
Jacob	Ladder	Genesis 28:10-17
Rachel	Shepherd's Crook	Genesis 29:9-12
Joseph	Colorful Coat	Genesis 37:3
Moses	Burning Bush	Exodus 3:1-6
Miriam	Music Notes	Exodus 15:20-21
Deborah	Palm Tree	Judges 4:4-5
Samuel	Lamp	1 Samuel 3:1-3
Ruth	Straw	Ruth 2:1-9
Jesse	Branch	Isaiah 11:1
David	Harp	1 Samuel 16:17-18
Solomon	Columns	1 Kings 5:2-5
Hezekiah	Tablets of the Law	2 Kings 18:1-6
Josiah	Book	2 Kings 23:1-3
Isaiah	Throne	Isaiah 6:1
Elizabeth	Dove	Luke 1:39-45
John the Baptist	River	Matthew 3:1-6
Mary	Angel	Luke 1:26-35
Jesus	Manger	Luke 2:1-7



The Advent Wreath

The circle of the wreath and the evergreens that make it up both signify God's endless mercy and undying love. Three purple candles and one rose-colored (pink) candle are evenly spaced around the wreath. There is one larger white candle in the center of the wreath. The wreath can be as simple as four candle holders with greenery laid around them to form a circle. However, some traditions attach meanings to using different greens, each signifying another aspect of the season. These include:

- Ivy—to remind us of the human spirit clinging to God's strength.
- Cedar—to remind us of eternal life available to all through Christ.
- Holly—to remind us of Jesus' crown of thorns.
- Bay—to remind us of victory over sin and death.

Each week, an additional candle is lit. As the light grows brighter, we are reminded that the Light of the World will soon arrive in glory. The central white candle is to be larger (often thicker) than the four in the wreath. This relatively recent addition to the Advent wreath signifies the Light of Christ and is first lit on Christmas Eve and relit burned on Christmas Day.

Advent Wreath Service

The family gathers around the wreath (which is not yet lit).

Leader Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

Leader Let us pray.

Use the appropriate prayer from pages nine and ten.

The candle may now be lit.

O Gracious Light, Phos hilaron *(said together)*

O gracious Light,

pure brightness of everliving Father in heaven,

O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun,

and our eyes behold the vesper light,

we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,

O son of God, O Giver of life,

and to be glorified through all the worlds.

Scripture Reading

Suggested passages for the day are listed with each weekly prayer.

After the reading

Reader The Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God

The Peace

Leader The peace of the Lord be with you

All And also with you

All may exchange the peace

Prayer

Leader The Lord be with you

All And also with you

Leader Let us pray

All pray The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;

Thy kingdom come; thy will be done,
In earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive them that trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,

For ever and ever. *Amen.*

Leader The Lord bless us and keep us. *Amen.*

The Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. *Amen.*

The Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace. *Amen.*

Leader Let us bless the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

Put out the candle or candles

Prayer for the **FIRST** week of Advent

The first candle may now be lit.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Sunday	Matthew 25:1-13	Thursday	Isaiah 58:6-9
Monday	Isaiah 1:16-18	Friday	1 John 2:8-11
Tuesday	Isaiah 60:1-3	Saturday	1 John 3:1-2
Wednesday	Psalm 43: 3-5		

Prayer for the **SECOND** week of Advent

The first and second candles may now be lit.

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.*

Sunday	Isaiah 40:1-5	Thursday	Psalm 130
Monday	Revelation 1:7-8	Friday	Micah 6:6-8
Tuesday	Matthew 22:41-45	Saturday	Jeremiah 14:8-9
Wednesday	Hosea 11:3-4		

Prayer for the THIRD week of Advent

The first, second and third candles may now be lit.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Sunday	Isaiah 9:6-7	Thursday	Isaiah 52:7
Monday	Isaiah 7:10-14	Friday	Jeremiah 33:14-16
Tuesday	Isaiah 11:1-6	Saturday	Malachi 3:1-2
Wednesday	Isaiah 40:10-11		

Prayer for the FOURTH week of Advent

The candles may all now be lit.

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 for ever. *Amen.*

Sunday	John 3:16-21	Thursday	Luke 1:57-66
Monday	Luke 1:1-25	Friday	Luke 1:67-80
Tuesday	Luke 1:26-38	Saturday	Matthew 1:18-25
Wednesday	Luke 1:39-56		

Concerning the Service

A purple candle is lit the first night and all of the first week. During the second week, an additional purple candle is lit. During the third week, the rose candle is also lit, and on the fourth week, all four of the colored candles are lit. The central white candle is lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Families may divide the responsibilities for leading the service, lighting the candles, and reading scripture so that everyone may have a turn as they are able. An individual will want to omit the portions of the brief service which call for a response, while following the outline for the remainder of the service.

This service follows An Order of Worship for the Evening found on page 109 in the Book of Common Prayer. Additional materials.

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St. Anne's
Episcopal Church
Conway, South Carolina