Advent Family Worship Guide
THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOKLET

It is the prayer that this Advent Season might be a time of drawing families closer together. The hope is that this booklet might be a tool to guide individuals in a special time of family worship.

As preparations are made for this Christmas Season, we are hopeful that Jesus will remain the focus of our plans. Parents can help children to understand the meaning of Advent, both literally and spiritually. Literally, Advent means “coming.” Both the infant child Jesus, and the second coming of our Lord Jesus. We can help each other to understand all that God our Father had done for us through His Son, Jesus.

Let us experience love, joy, peace, and wonder as we worship our Lord.

ADVENT IS FOR....

P raise...for who God is.
R estoration...of fellowship with God
E nergy.
P utting things right.
A doration.
R adiance...from His light.
A vailability...to serve.
T enderness.
I nspiration.
O pen...ears, eyes, and hearts.
N earness...to the heart of God.
THE TRADITION OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The tradition of the Advent wreath has a sketchy history that has its roots back in early Christian tradition. In 274 A.D. the Roman Emperor, Aurelian, chose the date of 25 December as the birthday of the unconquered sun (natalis solis invicti). This was the day when the sun was farthest north of the equator, and began to daily increase its period of light on the earth.

It was about 336 A.D. that the Christian community began commemorating 25 December as the day for commemorating the birth of Christ – the unconquered Son of Righteousness. This date coincides with Hanukkah, the Jewish Feast of Lights, the eight-day festival commemorating the victory of the Macabbees over Antiochus of Syria and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in 165 B.C. The Germanic or Nordic pagan tribes of Western Europe thought the sun was a sheel of fire revolving around the earth. Observing that on a certain day in the midwinter the sun’s appearance and disappearance marked the shortest day in the year, they called this cycle the “hwoel” or yule, a time for celebration. Part of their celebrating was to take a wheel from a cart and decorate it with green boughs, nuts, and fruits. Then they palced candles around the wheel and lighted them, hoping to get the attention of the god of light during the dead of winter. In 567 A.D. there is a reference in an ancient writing to a Bishop preaching an “Advent Sermon,” referring to the Advent – or arrival of the long-awaited Christ. During the last century, the Lutherans began the actual Christian tradition of the Advent wreath. Utilizing the ideas of – the wheel, or circle, indicating eternity; the candle, denoting light; and evergreen bough, a symbol of life – the Advent wreath had its birth. The four Sundays prior to Christmas Day were set aside as a time of remembrance and preparation, recalling the expectation of the Old Testament prophets concerning the coming of the Messiah. The four candles dramatize the four Sunday of Advent, each candle carrying a message. Many denominations attach this symbolism to the lighting of the candles:
**First Sunday of Advent:** The “Prophecy Candle” is lighted, reminding us that the Old Testament prophets kept alive a sense of hope for the revelation of God to man in the coming of the Messiah. The color of the candle is purple, symbolizing the royal rule of God over his creation.

**Second Sunday of Advent:** The “Bethlehem Candle” is lighted, reminding us that God came to man in time, at a place, in a moment in history, in a little village called Bethlehem. The color of the candle is purple, again, symbolizing the royalty of Christ’s birth in such humble surroundings.

**Third Sunday of Advent:** The “Shepherds Candle” is lighted, reminding us of how God works, choosing the weakest and the poorest to show his redemptive concern for man. The color of the candle is purple, symbolizing that we are a “chosen race, a royal priesthood of believers, a holy nation, God’s own people.”

**Fourth Sunday in Advent:** The “Angel’s Candle” is lighted, reminding us that we are called to be messengers of this good news. The color of the candle is purple, symbolizing the royal nature of his message.

**Christmas Eve:** “Mary’s Candle” is lighted reminding us of the mother of Jesus. The color of the candle is rose-pink, symbolizing her purity and tenderness.

**Christmas Day:** The “Christ Candle” is lighted if there is a Christmas morning service in commemoration of the birth of Christ.
Service for the First Sunday in Advent

“The Prophecy Candle”

**Hymn:** O Come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, Born the King of Angels,
O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

**Scripture:** The Christmas prophecy. Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

**Candlelighting Ceremony:** As the first purple candle is lighted, a member of the family should say, “I light this candle on the first Sunday of Advent to remind us that we must prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child. The first candle represents the prophets’ hopes and prayers.

**Hymn:** It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold;
Peace on earth, good will to men,
From heaven’s all gracious King;
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.
For lo! The days are hast’ning on,
By prophets seen of old,
When with the evercircling years,
Shall come the time foretold,
When the new heav’n and earth shall own
The Prince of Peace their King,
And the whole world send back the song,
Which now the angels sing.

**Prayer:** On this first Sunday in Advent, O God, we are thankful for our family and friends as we look forward to Christmas. Help us to remember the real meaning of this season and to make room for the spirit of Jesus in our home and in our hearts.

AMEN.
Service for the Second Sunday in Advent

“The Bethlehem Candle”

**Hymn:** O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie,
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in the dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

**Candlelighting Ceremony:** Relight the first candle followed by the second purple candle, saying: “I light these candles on the second Sunday in Advent to remind us that we must prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child. The first candle represents the prophet’s hopes and prayers. The second purple candle represents the birthplace of Christ, a lowly stable in the village of Bethlehem.

**Scripture:** A Journey to Bethlehem. Luke 2:1-7

**Poem:** Softly the stars were shining,
Shining with golden ray,
Over the Baby Jesus, cradled upon the hay.
Softly the Babe was sleeping,
Angels their watch were keeping,
Calm and secure, tender and pure,
Jesus, the Holy Child.

**Prayer:** Dear Father, we praise you that you have given Jesus to show us the way of faith and love. We pray that in this Advent Season, Christmas Day and throughout the coming year we will walk in the way that Jesus taught us. AMEN.
Service for the Third Sunday in Advent

"The Shepherds’ Candle"

Hymn: The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winters night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Born is the King of Israel.


Candlelighting Ceremony: Relight the first and second candles followed by the third purple candle. As you light the candles, say: “I light these candles on the third Sunday in Advent to remind us again that we must prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child. The first candle represents the prophets’ hopes and prayers, the second candle the Bethlehem stable where Christ was born, and the third purple candle represents the shepherds who were the first to hear the angels proclaim the good news, ‘The Christ is born.’”

Poem: What child is this, who lays to rest, On Mary’s lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet While shepherds watch are keeping. This, this, is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing; This, this, is Christ the King The Babe, the son of Mary.

Prayer: Glory be to you, Father Almighty, who has given us your only begotten son, that we may live through him. Glory be to God. Glory be to you, O Holy Spirit, who does direct and rule our hearts. All glory be to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, world without end. AMEN.
"The Angels’ Candle"

**Hymn:** Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing oe’r the plains.
And the mountains in reply, Echo back their joyous strains.
Gloria, in excelsis De-o, Gloria in excelsis De-o.


**Candlelighting Ceremony:** Relight the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd candles. Light the 4th purple candle saying, “I light these candles on the fourth Sunday in Advent to remind us again that we must prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child.
The 1st candle represents the prophets’ hopes and prayers, the 2nd candle the Bethlehem stable where Christ was born, the 3rd candle the shepherds who were the first to receive the good news, and the 4th purple candle represents the Angels who proclaimed the Messiah’s birth.

**Poem:** As lately we watched o’er our fields throw’ the night
A stare there was seen of such glorious light;
All throw’ the night the angels did sing,
Sweet carols of praise of the birth of a King.
Blest be the hour, welcome the morn, For Christ, our dear Savior, on earth is now born.

**Prayer:** O Father, who has declared your love by the birth of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem, help us to welcome him with gladness and to make room for him in our common days, so that we may live at peace with one another and in good will with all epople everywhere. AMEN.

**Hymn:** Hark the Herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King.
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled;
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic host proclaim; Christ is born in Bethlehm! Hark, the herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King.

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**Services for Christmas Eve**
“Mary’s Candle”

**Hymn:** Silent Night! Holy Night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Silent Night! Holy Night!
Son of God, love’s pure light!
Radiant beams from thy Holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesseus, Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

**Candlelighting Ceremony:** Relight the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> candles. Light the pink candle and say, “I light these candles on this Christmas Eve to remind us that we must prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child which is near at hand. The 1<sup>st</sup> candle represents the prophets’ hopes and prayers, the 2<sup>nd</sup> the Bethlehem stable where Christ was born, the 3<sup>rd</sup> the shepherds who were the first to hear the good news, the 4<sup>th</sup> the angels who proclaimed the Messiah’s birth, and the pink candle which represents Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus.

**Scripture:** The Announcement to Mary. Luke 1:26-38.

**Hymn:** It came upon the midnight clear That glorious song of old, From angels bending near the earth To touch their harps of gold; “peace on the earth, good will to men From Heaven’s all gracious King. The world in solemn stillness lay To hear the angels sing. For lo! The days are hast’ning on, By prophets seen of old, When with the ever-circling years Shall come th time foretold. When the new heaven and earth shall own The Prince of Peace their King, And the Whole world send back the song Which now the angels sing.

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**Service for Christmas Day**

“The Christ Candle”
**Hymn:** Joy to the World! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room;
And heaven and nature sing. (repeat line 2 times.)
Joy to the World! The Savior reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, Repeat the sounding joy. (repeat line 2 times.)
He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love. (repeat line 2 times.)

**Candlelighting Ceremony:** Relight the four purple candles along with the pink Mary’s candle. As you light the tall white candle, say “I light the Christ candle as we recall the words of Isaiah who said, ‘The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.’ This LIGHT IS JESUS! O precious candlelight may your light shine round the earth, that sin and hate may vanish and Peace may crown Christ’s day of birth. For His sake, we light the candles, and shed His holy light abroad, so that His love may win the whole world back to God.”

**Scripture:** Christ is Born. Luke 2:6-11.

**Hymn:** We three Kings of Orient are, Bearing gifts we traverse afar Field and fountain, moor and mountain, Following yonder star. O Star of wonder, Star of night Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding Guide us to thy perfect light.

**Prayer:** O God, who by the shining of a star did guide the wisemen to behold your Son, our Lord; show us your heavenly lighyt, and give us grace to follow until we find Him, and finding Him, rejoice. And grant that as they presented gifts we now may bring Him the offering of a loving heart, and adoring spirit, and an obedient will for His honor and for Your glory, O God most high. AMEN.

(May the joy, love, and peace of this day be with each of you. Happy Birthday, Christ our Lord!)
From Services in 2002:

First Sunday in Advent: Hope

Lighting of the Advent Candle: Gospel Lesson Mark 13:32-37

Hymn: O Come, O Come Emmanuel


Unison Prayer: Lord our God, Emmanuel, thank you for being with us today. Help us to be awake and alert to your presence. Strengthen us with faith as we wait for the fullness of your peace. Encourage us with hope as we long for the Day when your love will bind all people together in complete harmony. Lead us to live in love for you and others here in this world and so be prepared for life in your Kingdom to come. Amen.

Second Sunday in Advent: Joy

Lighting of the Advent Candles: The Scripture Lesson Isaiah 40:1-5

Hymn: Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus


Third Sunday in Advent: Love

Lighting of the Advent Candle: Scripture Lesson Isaiah 61:1-4

Hymn: Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers!

Prayer: Eternal God, who in Jesus Christ awakens our hope for a new heaven and a new earth, we approach you with troubled but expectant hearts. We are troubled by conflicts within, yet reassured by your promise of salvation for those who trust you. We are troubled by conflicts without, yet encouraged by your pledge of peace for those who follow you. Take from us, O God, our fear, and make us messengers of the hope for peace on earth. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Advent: Peace

Lighting of the Advent Candle: Scripture Lesson Psalm 89:1-4

Prayer: Gracious God, fill us with your Light this morning. Cleanse us of those things that obscure our view of your presence. Remove those things that block our hearts from the brilliance of your love. Cause your Light to brighten even the darkest corners of our lives and radiate through us into the world. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who is the Light of the World. Amen.

Hymn: O Thou Joyful, O Thou Wonderful

**Jesse Tree**

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
From him roots a Branch will bear fruit,
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him –
The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and of power,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord –
And he will delight in the fear of the Lord.
--Isaiah 11:1-3a

*Jeremiah 23:5-6—righteous branch*

A beautiful ancient tradition. It is Christ’s family tree. You take a plain tree with no leaves (this is a symbol of the absence of life before the coming of Christ). Each of the following symbols are placed on the tree from time to time during Advent. Shere do you get them? Well, you could buy them, but why not make your own! You could start off with a picture for Creation, an apple (Adam), and ark (Noah), a sword (Abraham): and so on until we reach Jesus, our Savior, the new King. The idea is to tell each other the bible story behind each of these symbols. A beautiful way to spend Advent and prove to yourself and to your whole family that this is a great time of the year and that God’s coming really does make a difference. Your actions will show you of our history as a people of Christ, ancestors of the tribe of David, son of Jesse.

**Jesse Tree Symbols and Scripture:**


2. Adam -- An apple
   Gen. 3:1-7

3. Noah -- An ark
   Gen. 5:25-29

4. Abraham -- A Sword

5. Isaac -- A stone altar or sacrifice
   Gen 26:1-25

6. Jacob -- A ladder
   Gen. 25:21-35

7. Joseph -- A multi-colored robe
   Gen. 30:22-24

8. Moses -- Twin tablets of the law
   Ex. 2, 3;20:1-17