

Bible passages suggested for an Advent wreath service

<p>First Week</p> <p>Sunday Matthew 25:1-13 Monday Isaiah 1:16-18 Tuesday Isaiah 60:1-3 Wednesday Psalm 43: 3-5 Thursday Isaiah 58:6-9 Friday 1 John 2:8-11 Saturday 1 John 3:1-2</p>	<p>Third Week</p> <p>Sunday Isaiah 9:6-7 Monday Isaiah 7:10-14 Tuesday Isaiah 11:1-6 Wednesday Isaiah 40:10-11 Thursday Isaiah 52:7 Friday Jeremiah 33:14-16 Saturday Malachi 3:1-2 Saturday</p>
<p>Second Week</p> <p>Sunday Isaiah 40:1-5 Monday Revelation 1:7-8 Tuesday Matthew 22:41-45 Wednesday Hosea 11:3-4 Thursday Psalm 130 Friday Micah 6:6-8 Saturday Jeremiah 14:8-9</p>	<p>Fourth Week</p> <p>Sunday John 3:16-21 Monday Luke 1:1-25 Tuesday Luke 1:26-38 Wednesday Luke 1:39-56 Thursday Luke 1:57-66 Friday Luke 1:67-80 Saturday Matthew 1:18-25 Dec. 24</p>

This service follows An Order of Worship for the Evening found on page 109 of the Book of Common Prayer. Additional materials © 1999 Frank Logue (frank@kingofpeace.org).

Advent

Increasingly, Christmas has become a holiday cut off from its purpose: celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Recapturing the season of Advent as a time of preparing for Christ's coming can be important in refocusing our Christmas celebrations. An Advent wreath service takes only a few minutes each night, yet it can become a wonderful time to center families and individuals with a nightly anticipation of Christ's Incarnation and promised return. It is a time to celebrate God's promise to be with us always.

Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming." Advent begins the church year, starting four Sundays before Christmas. Since at least the last half of the 6th century, Advent has been set aside as a time of preparing for through self-examination and seeking forgiveness as the church prepares for Christ's Second Coming even as it anticipates 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 following the Advent Wreath service may tie the service more closely to the calendar's countdown of days.



Celebrating Advent in the Home

An Advent Wreath Service

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Put out the candle or candles

Prayer for the first week of Advent

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.*

Prayer for the second week of Advent

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.*

Prayer for the third week of Advent

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.*

Prayer for the fourth week of Advent 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.*

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 the following page.]

The candle or candles may now be lit.

O Gracious Light *(said together)*

O gracious Light,
pure brightness of the 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 following the service.)

After each 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

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.*

A Nativity Scene

A nativity scene (sometimes called a crèche) is yet another way to highlight Advent's anticipation. Instead of putting out the whole set at once, we can build the scene slowly. For example, we might 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 we can add the baby Jesus, shepherds, and angels. (The wise men and camels don't arrive until Epiphany (January 6).) Building the scene slowly expresses the 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 arising from David's line. Christians believe this promise is fulfilled in Jesus, the King of Kings, who was a descendant of Jesse.

One Advent tradition is to decorate a tree branch with symbols from the stories of the Old Testament, helping us to remember ancestors in faith. They remind us that our belief grows from deep roots of thousands of years of those who sought to follow God. Creating a Jesse Tree can be connected to an Advent wreath service by our adding a new ornament each evening at the time of the service.

To create a Jesse Tree, 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.

Possible symbols and their scripture references are listed on the following page.

Jesse Tree Symbols

The following list suggests 25 symbols to represent Old Testament figures in decorating a Jesse Tree and a scripture reference from which each symbol is derived. Using 25 symbols allows a different ornament to be added to the tree each day in December leading up to Christmas.

Mary
Jesus

angel
manger

Luke 1:26-35
Luke 2:1-7

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

An Advent Wreath

Both the circle of the wreath and the evergreens from which the Advent wreath is made signify God's endless mercy and undying love. The wreath can be as simple as four candle holders with greenery laid around them to form a circle.

Three purple candles and one rose-colored (pink) candle are evenly spaced around the wreath. A white candle, set in the center of the wreath, is to be larger (often thicker) than the four. This relatively recent addition to the Advent wreath signifies the Light of Christ and is first lit on Christmas Eve and relit to be burned on Christmas Day.

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.

Some traditions attach meanings to using different greens, each signifying an 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.

Observing an evening Advent wreath service in the home

A purple candle is lit the first night and each night of the first week. Of December.

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. Individuals observing the service alone may omit the responses.

Text for the Advent wreath service follows.

Bibles passages suggested for each night of Advent are listed on the page following the service.