



Advent 2020

Dearly beloved,

For millennia, people have brought evergreen boughs into their homes in winter as symbols of life and with the hope it will bring them good luck, and good health. For Christians, it was easy to see the everlasting – evergreen - love of God and Jesus in evergreens they brought into their homes at Christmas whether it was as boughs, trees, garlands or wreaths.

The tradition of what we would recognize as an Advent wreath was the idea of a beleaguered Lutheran pastor and teacher in Germany by the name of Johann Wichern. In the days before Christmas, his students would ask him every day if it was Christmas yet. As a way to help them understand when Christmas would arrive, and to help them wait, he built a huge wooden ring topped with candles and evergreens; 20 candles for each of the weekdays left and 4 for the Sundays. It was huge. Though the Advent wreath was created for children, and his sanity, the pastor thought through what he wished it to symbolize: A circle to remember God's infinite love, evergreens to represent eternal life brought by Jesus Christ and candles which are God as the light of the world coming to earth as Jesus. It was a deceptively simple idea that became a beloved institution throughout the world and in most church denominations within a hundred years.

Naturally, over time the Advent wreath took on new forms as well as developed new meanings. For most US denominations, there are four candles: three blue and a rose or maybe three purple and a pink. Violet is traditional color of penitential seasons – which Advent is understood to be – and pink or rose is used for the Third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday (Latin for “rejoice”), because we take a pause in pause in the penitential spirit of Advent. But often blue is used instead of purple in Advent because though it is a season of repentance, it is also full of hope. Advent does not have the solemnness of Lent, thus its color should not be purple. But not every church can afford multiple vestments, so, purple it is. Sometimes the candles may also symbolize hope (week one), peace (week two), joy (week three) and love (week four).

On the first Sunday in Advent, November 29, if you can wait, we will put our Advent wreaths together – together. On Zoom. And do the first short service together too, if you wish. The Zoom link will be sent to you soon in an eblast with a reminder and any other information you might need.

May this Advent season be a blessing to you.

-Immanuel's Clergy



Advent Prayers for a Household *by PJ Hobbs*

Why is this faith practice important?

Advent helps us to wait, anticipate, and prepare for the many ways Christ comes into the world, including at Christmas.

These prayers are intended for use in homes, regardless of the size and form of the household (e.g. singles, friends, couples, children, teens and parents).

Advent Prayers may be used once a week, or several times a week. This prayer guide can be used as is, or expanded with other resources and improvisation. Folks are encouraged to add readings, activities, discussion topics that are meaningful to those in their household.



Materials Needed

An Advent wreath with candles can serve as a focal point for the household, but it is not completely necessary.

How to do it

A Time to Come Together: Gather the household using the opening sentences on the following page. Then read a suggested passage from the Bible, or choose your own.

A Time to Be Together: After the Bible reading, the household will be together in its own way. Consider the following suggestions:

- Share a meal at table.
- Enter into silence, for as little as one minute, or as much 30 minutes. Silence may be marked by stillness, pondering the Bible passage, or gazing on the Advent candles or an icon. Alternatively, silence may be combined with a household task or Christmas preparation. After silence, bring the household back together, perhaps with a bell.
- Have a discussion, either during the meal or in a different setting. Consider the questions on the following page.

A Time to Pray Together: Pray silently or aloud, and/or use the litany on the following page.

A Time to Go into the World Together: It is important that the household acknowledges its vocation within the wider world. Use the final lines of the liturgy to close your time together.

Resources for this practice

Come Together *If using a wreath and/or candles:*

Leader We light these candles in hope and expectation.

All Jesus is the light of the World.

Leader We wait joyfully for the coming of Jesus.

All Into the world, into the Church, into our home Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!

Bible Verses for Each Week

Week of Advent I Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour. (Matthew 24:44)

Week of Advent II May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Week of Advent III You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. (James 5:8)

Week of Advent IV Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

Be Together *Meal, activity, silence, or discussion: Consider the following discussion questions:*

- What happened today that reminded you how much God loves the world?
- Was there a time today when you felt particularly close to Jesus?
- What might we do this Advent and Christmas as an act of loving service?

Pray Together *Offer prayers, silently or aloud. The following litany may be used.*

Leader That the Church will be a place of hope and a sign of the goodness of God.

All Hear us, Lord of Glory, for you we wait.

Leader That all people will serve the needs of others and care for creation.

All Hear us, Lord of Glory, for you we wait.

Leader That this home will be a place of welcome, patience, truth, safety, and love.

All Hear us, Lord of Glory, for you we wait.

All say the Lord's Prayer.

Go into the World Together

Leader Peace be upon us and within this house,

All And in all the world.

Leader Let us live Good News wherever we may be.

All Amen, Amen!

About the author

Peter John Hobbs (PJ) is the Director of Mission for the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa (Canada) and an Instructor in D.Min Studies at Virginia Theological Seminary. PJ and Diane are raising and/or launching three daughters: Hannah, Mary Grace, and Rachel.

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